Contests in meaning: The rhetoric of participation.

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"CONTESTS IN MEANING : THE RHETORIC OF PARTICIPATION"

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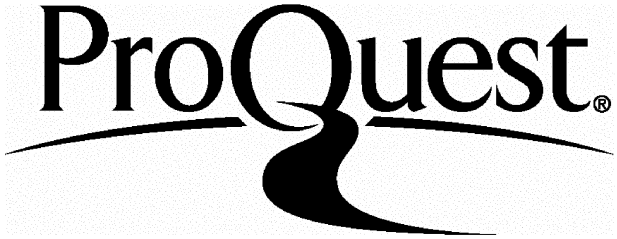

For John Elliott Moses Bale.

"The goalkeeper is trying to work out which corner the man taking the kick will aim for," Bloch said. "If he knows the player, he knows which corner he usually goes for. But probably the man taking the penalty is also reckoning that the goalie has worked this out himself. So the goalie has to go on working out that just today the ball might go into the other corner. But what if the man taking the kick follows the goalkeeper's thinking and plans to shoot into the usual corner after all? And so on, and so on."

Bloch could see all the players gradually clearing the penalty area. The penalty kicker adjusted the ball. Then he too backed out of the penalty area.

"When the kicker starts his run, the goalkeeper unconsciously shows with his body which way he'll throw himself even before the ball is kicked, and the kicker can simply kick in the other direction," Bloch said. "The goalie might just as well try prizing open a door with a piece of straw."

The kicker suddenly started his run. The goalkeeper, who was wearing a bright yellow jersey, stood absolutely still, and the penalty kicker shot the ball into his hands.

(Peter Handke.
"The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick"
Quartet Books. London. 1977.)

"I've stopped noticing the commonplace acts of life, like putting my hat on, riding on escalators, or eating a soft-boiled egg; but later they come back to me as metaphors for my situation."

(Peter Handke.
"Short Letter, Long Farewell"
Quartet Books. London. 1978.)

"At the same time you could say there is no listener and everyone in the hall is participating in the music ... everyone is a pianist."

(K. Jarrett.
Sleeve notes to 'Keith Jarrett : Concerts' ECM 1227-29. 1982.)

CONTENTS

Abstract

This thesis takes seriously the injunction to make accounts of social affairs adequate at the level of meaning.

The substantive focus of the study is an attempt by a large pharmaceutical company to introduce a worker participation scheme. The thesis, then, stands firstly as an extended case study of a worker participation scheme.

The theoretic interest was with the processes by which 'participation' came to have meaning in the context of this company for those involved.

An approach to meaning was initially taken via the concept of the definition of the situation. This was useful to a point but also flawed in some respects. Thus, the research practice, and now the thesis, begins to build an approach based on some of the conceptions of language and meaning developed by the post-structuralists and semioticians.

The thesis develops around a dialectic engendered by the relation between these ways of theorising and the emerging data. At the heart of that dynamic is a creative and irresolvable tension between the theoretic notions of the productivity of language, the proliferation of meaning, and that pragmatic effort at closure engaged in by persons in their routine, practical activities.

That relationship drives the analysis and leads to a consideration of the processes of attempted closure, its failure and the possibility of a counter-move. It is concerned, then, with the place of rhetoric and ideology in those processes and ultimately conceives of the act of signification and the defining of situations as an exercise of power.

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Lastly to my wife Chris for her soul.

On(e) Preface (Introduction)

> "...the structure 'preface - text' becomes open at both ends. The text has no stable identity, stable origin...each act of reading 'the text' is a preface to the next. The reading of a self-professed preface is no exception to this rule."
>
> (Derrida 1977 p.xii)

Derrida has drawn attention to the peculiar nature of prefaces. They are made to stand as a kind of summary of the text that is to follow. They are at the same time both separate from that text, a comment upon it, but also clearly also in some way part of it, not entirely separable. They are not the same as the body of the text, nor are they other.

There is something strange about constructing a piece of writing that is a summary and a guide to another piece of writing and then putting them in conjunction, one before the other in the same work. In what ways can the first hope to encapsulate the second? If the extension of the second can be reduced and captured by the first, why write the second? The first is irredeemably different - the preface must inevitably be something other than the body of the text but its very presence displays its supposed inclusion in the totality. What can one say in a preface?

What is being indicated here is a form of Derrida's (anti-) concept of 'supplementarity'. In his deconstruction of Rousseau, Derrida shows how Rousseau conceived of writing in the traditional derogatory manner, seeing it as a 'supplement' to the spoken; at a distance from speech, at a distance from speech in the same way that

speech is at a distance from that which it 'depicts'. The French verb 'suppleer' has a double sense: that of an addition for the sake of completion, and also that of replacement. For Rousseau, Derrida asserts, writing is a supplement of speech completing it - but also standing-in for it, replacing that which is absent. A supplement, then, is both an addition and a replacement or substitute.

Thus, a 'preface' is an addition to the main body of a text, but as 'preface' it stands as a temporary replacement for the text. A preface is a brief substitute for the wholeness of the main text. But it fails always on both counts. It is an inadequate replacement; it is always different from the text. The two can never be in correspondence - a preface, then, perhaps stands alone as a sort of mini-text in its own right. It also fails, at the same time as an addition; it always remains a part of the whole - if not, why include it. The instance of preface expresses both senses of supplement and its elusive tension. Part of the implication is that preface, as supplement is included to fill a gap; there must be a deficiency, an emptiness in the work that necessitates a (re-) presence in the form of a preface. A preface, then, is both an addition, a 'surplus' to the main body, and also a substitution, a completion of an emptiness.

Derrida's aim is not mere verbal chicanery, he wants to demonstrate that Western metaphysics with its adherence to the principle of logocentric presence, habitually reverts to the supplement whenever that presence (that guarantees meaning) is threatened by the possibility of a non-presence (no final arbitor of meaning). Thus Rousseau asserts the primacy of Nature to which education is a supplement - Nature as a plenitude that is originary, a guarantee. Similarly writing is treated as a supplement to speech. The supposed plenitude of speech - the self-presence in speech that guarantees meaning to

the consciousness - is threatened by the potential and the distance of writing. To reaffirm the self-presence of speech, writing is then made to appear merely as a supplement. But in its very supplementarity, writing exposes the emptiness at the heart of this view of speech, it reveals the elemental non-presence that the supplement of writing is made to cover for.

The supplement thesis reveals in fact that speech is already invaded by the energies of writing. The supposed self-presence of speech is in fact dependent upon those structures of writing - the emptiness of speech is filled from the outset by the supplement of writing. Speech is unable to find its primal origin; it cannot escape its admixture with the confessedly non-originary written. The search for presence and origin of language is always already undercut by the necessary entry of writing with its relations of difference. As Harari (1979) puts it, the notion of the pure origin, "the metaphysical concept par excellance, is altogether undermined, since the supplement is no less originary than that which is natural" (p.35). Speech is already inhabited by the differences and traces of non-present meaning which constitute articulate language. As C. Norris puts it in his review of "Of Grammatology":

> "The supplement is that which both marks the lack of 'presence', or state of metaphysical plenitude, forever beyond recall, and compensates for this lack by setting in motion the 'economy of differance' (another of Derrida's anti-concepts) which is introduced by writing"
>
> (1979 p.38 My parenthesis)

All this is not merely an excuse for not writing a conventional preface. I have already taken considerable licence by conflating 'preface' and 'introduction'. This was done because what has been said here applies more properly to the 'abstract'. However, the abstract is supposed to perform particular purposes, to relate to certain

audiences; there are certain pragmatic constraints on the presentation of an abstract that forces the displacement of this conceit to this place. That obligation reflexively serves as a marker for the tension that is at the heart of this thesis.

The discourse on supplement is not only a reflexive excursis on this piece of writing as a 'preface', it does also stand as something that prefigures subsequent themes in the main body of the text. It, in a sense, then, undercuts its own argument. It is a conventional preface in that it <u>is</u> a comment upon what is to follow. It prefigures some conceptions on language, meaning and discourse that pervade the text proper, but intimates the doubt that accompanies that effort. All is tension. It is both meant (literally) and not achieved.

With respect to the relation between this and the 'abstract' a further prefigurative tension is revealed. It is a tension between a theoretic conception of language and meaning and a recognition of certain pragmatic practices in the use of language and the construction of meaning in everyday social life.

Perhaps the crucial nexus of this thesis lies at a derived confluence between the abstract theories of meaning developed by the post-structuralists and the pragmatic aspects of meaning disclosed by the ethnomethodological programme. Although, at the same time, the thesis seeks to avoid the fixity implied by the application of such (sub-) disciplinary labels.

The post-structuralists emphasise the textual, 'written' nature of language; its productivity. Meaning resides in the constant 'play' between signifiers in endless and unbounded relationship. There is an 'in principle' impossibility of closing meaning, of fixing its threatened ceaseless proliferation. They deny firstly that the

possibility exists of locating a fixed, final and absolute meaning in relation to any verbal phenomenon that enters the public domain. They also deny that there is a locus that can act as a point of origin, and thus as a final guarantor of meaning. The search for an absolute arbitrator for a specific formulation, be it in the author, the author's intention, or some other more or less metaphysical source, is misplaced. They further deny that meaning can be fixed and held by any imposed meta-language. The notion of an encompassing meta-language runs counter to the view of language as a proliferating plurality and the site of a ceaseless activity, and productivity. A meta-language does violence to the textual, and is an imposition artificially constraining naturally occurring language. This includes the implied meta-languages of formal versions of structuralism that insert a static structure that operates to confine meaning.

This needs to be put against what I take to be a crucial implication of the ethnomethodological achievement, namely that their focus on everyday language use reveals that it is in fact a part of those mundane interactional activities to attempt to control meaning. In our everyday practical use of language, attempts <u>are</u> made to control meaning, to close off the potential proliferation and to present <u>a</u> specific and assumed unitary and authoritative meaning. Interactants attempt to override the purely textual in language and to control its productivity. People in their practical use of language are, in Barthes' terms, ecrivant rather than ecrivain. That is, they treat language simply as if it were a means to some extra-linguistic end and aspire to referencing something substantively in the content of the text, and are little concerned with the means by which a text is constructed or the achievement of meaning. Most social interaction is characterised by attempts to close meaning, to overcome the natural productivity of

a language. There are efforts to present one's utterances as final, absolute, transparent and authoritative. Meanings are not normally pursued through the textual but are only pursued to some presumed originary point that all, at least tacitly, are supposed to agree is as far as one can go in order to validate the meaning. That is, there is an assumed source that is taken as the origin of the meaning and to which one need only refer to guarantee the veracity of what is meant. Meanings are anchored to this source providing a stable base and bedrock beneath which one need not mine further for meaning. It is a more subtle and contentious part of the ethnomethodological programme to assert that it is actually a function of indexical expressions to achieve this sense of order and adequacy of formulation. It is at this point in the ethnomethodological programme that it reaches its limits. It is at this point that it begins to lose heart and retreat from the abyss. Sensing the loss of a centre, of a mooring, on some versions it begins to reintroduce a type of deep structure and an element of psychological (or even structural) invariance. The potential for the wild variance of all expressions is tamed by the installation of something in the individual or in the very structure of interactions that reinstates invariance across situations.

This is the fundamental tension at the heart of this text. Both reflexively in its own attempt (and imposed/felt obligation, for certain practical purposes) to speak authoritatively, and its effort to resist doing so; and in relation to the phenomena of which it speaks.

The thesis begins by taking the injunction, derived from a consideration from the concept of 'defining the situation' to pursue the phenomena at the level of meaning. The text here retains and displays the theoretical and methodological trajectory of changing and developing perspective. The whole presentation of the thesis allows

that movement to remain present. It reveals the continuing dynamic relationship of theoretic thinking put in relation to the phenomena under study.

That developed conception of meaning asserts that the meanings of participation (the phenomenal focus of the study) will be diverse and multiplex. Each meaning bound to its contextual use, but re-entering intertextually other articulated meanings in other contexts, creating a complicated fabric of networked signifiers. To tear a strip from that fabric is to damage the totality. The strip itself will re-connect in a fresh fabric, but its original relations to the first fabric are lost.

Unfortunately the metaphor of fabric fails to adequately capture the processural nature of emergent meanings. Any report is of course partial, even extended longitudinal studies. The meanings of participation, and surrounding participation, will continue to reverberate long after the period of the researchers involvement. This despite it being part of my contention that the mundane attempts at closure by various parties, will achieve partial success of a practical kind. Certain meanings will, and can be seen to have, become institutionalised. Somehow (and that 'somehow' is part of the question to which this thesis addresses itself) certain meanings obtain an ascendancy and achieve a degree of fixity. A collusive consensus, however repressive, is achieved that constrains meaning within certain (ideological) boundaries.

This thesis cannot but fail, then, to be other than fragmentary. Just as a torn strip of fabric will not capture the swarm of meaning, so the whole fabric is not capable of being displayed in total. This is not merely a practical difficulty, but an 'in principle' difficulty. The fabric extends indefinitely and on three planes at that. The total

fabric can only be hinted at. The full range of potential meanings is as much an impossibility as the discovery of a single meaning. The array of meanings and their relationships that may be presented here will necessarily be partial.

All this can only be said at all by being somewhat unreflexive. In fact the meanings emerge now in that textual space created between what is written here and the reading practice that confronts it. What is written here about the meanings of participation is already part of a complicated process in which the original 'speaker - hearer' relationship is invaded by the element of 'researcher - observer'. The natural discourse or material text is in a relationship with the researcher from which meanings emerge. In the seeing, and further in the writing, is a productive process. But that process does not come to an end with its graphic representation. The reader must then enter the process and in his relationship with the text, and with his more tenuous relationship with the researcher - speaker - hearer/text relationships, meanings continue to emerge. The play of meaning goes on. Its fixity is achievable only artificially, and/or with the passive acquiescence of a slothful or repressed audience.

The irksomeness of trying to capture and mount meaning has struck some as altogether a fruitless occupation. Certain ethnomethodologists and the post-structuralists have rather turned away from the hunt and have become watchers par excellance. The interest is not in <u>what</u> something means, but <u>how</u> something means. Here the focus is upon how certain (fragments) of meaning relating to participation came to be. The interest is in the process of 'signifiance' not at what is significant. In another sense, the interest is not to describe or develop structures, but to examine the processes of structuration. Not what a thing means but the mundane practices by which it is achieved.

What questions then can be asked?

PART I

TRACKING MEANING

CHAPTER I

DEFINING SITUATIONS

Introduction - Sociological Stories and Research Trajectories

Research activity is just that: activity - it is a process. In that process the researcher and the researched change over time. Often reports of research seek to deny that. They 'clean-up' the account - present it as a coherent, ordered, authoritative account; invariably imposing a fixing structure on the process. Furthermore, they deny their own involvement in the process. The developments, alterations, theoretic cul-de-sacs and methodological blunders encountered and enacted in the research process are often smoothed out in the account. The version and the theoretic position reported at that point in the process when the report is written, is presented as the complete one, a neat, ordered account as if that was the conceptualising that was present all along - as if one strand of thought pervaded and directed the activity from start to finish. I want to more reflexively display the processual nature of this research activity.

Maxwell Atkinson (in Bell and Newby 1977) in his account of his research of Coroner's classification of deaths as suicide draws attention to the reality of the changes in perspective that take place during the research process. He also, incidently, displays the partiality of that attempt to provide accounts of the research process and the research phenomena:

> "...all that can be offered is one of several possible versions of how the research was done, events of significance and so on, with each version being equally open to the charge of being no more than yet another piece of neatly reconstructed logic."
>
> (Bell and Newby 1977, p.31 emphasis added).

The last point is particularly apposite. It reflects that point where the ethnomethodologists are concerned to be reflexive about theorizing (see Blum, A.F. 1974) and where traditional methods construct decontextualised descriptions and theories about social phenomena, that are presented as 'accurate' accounts and are held to be in some way 'better' than the 'situated practical descriptions and theories of members' (Bell and Newby ibid. p.45).

But to return to the central point, Atkinson explicitly recognises the developments and changes that took place in his own relationship to his data and his data sources. He outlines how he moved through a series of methodological and theoretical changes and stages during the course of his research. He tries to provide some account of this transformational process. He identifies 'the positivist phase' with the concomitant dominant problem of accuracy; the 'interactionist phase and the problem of meaning' and ethnomethodology and the problem of categorisation.

Similarly my own approach reflects a series of perspectival shifts. It began with a substantive interest in participation as a topic. Soon embroiled in the usual methodological and theoretical dilemmas, a handle on the phenomena was sought in that realm of social psychological theorising that loosely fits under the rubric of symbolic interactionism. The issue became oriented around the social constructivist perspective (see Holzner, B. 1968; Berger, P.L. and Luckman, T. 1967; and Jehenson, R. 1974 for elaborated accounts explicitly on that notion). That movement is concerned with the view that features of reality are socially constructed in the symbolic manipulation of members in their constant interactions. It is illustrated in relation to my research process, by the adoption of, 'The Social Construction of Participation' as a working title for the thesis. Some

time was spent somewhat becalmed amidst the competing and complimentary relevancies and insights of a whole group of adjacent perspectives, some of which Morris, M. (1977) collects under the label 'creative sociology'. Thus some of the conceptualising from the 'Sociology of the Absurd' (see Lyman, S.M. & Scott, M.B. 1970), 'Dramatism' (informed by the K. Burke ouvre - see Overington, M.A. 1977. Also see Messinger, S.L., Sampson, H. and Towne, R.D. 1962; Brisset, D. and Edgley, C. 1975, Edgley, C. & Turner, R.E. 1975, Harre, R. 1979, Burns, E. 1972; Lipp, W. 1972; Boland, J. and Young, T.R. 1972; Dewey, R. 1969 for theoretical elaborations), varieties of Symbolic Interactionism (see Meltzer, Petras and Reynolds 1975), Ethogenics (the work of Rom Harre; most comprehensively displayed in Harre 1979) and others that presented themselves as variants of a phenomenological perspective (that strand that builds via A. Schutz. Important texts include Psathas 1973, Roche, M. 1973 and Natanson, M. 1973). From a concern with contextulising meaning and with the notion of reflexivity led on to an ethnomethodological 'phase' (the literature is, of course immense here, but Garfinkel's 1967 text remains seminal). From there connections and developments were noticed in an entirely separate strand of thought mostly embedded in alien disciplines: semiotics. Where ethnomethology reaches its limits, splits and ceases to be a unified approach - the writers on semiotics, particular those tagged 'post-structuralists' have some important contributions to make. The concern driving here is still that of meaning, the process of signification - the opening and the closing of language.

By the rhetoric of the metaphors of 'stages' and 'phases', I am implying a succession of relatively discrete and independent units and also connoting a progression, even an improvement. That does not

accurately reflect the process or convey what I intend. I certainly do not want to imply that each of these perspectives became included and was then rejected as in some way inadequate. At the strongest, I would only want to suggest that each transition point represents a recognition of some fresh connections and the possibility of a more appropriate theoretic resource in relation to the phenomena I was engaging and a potentially more useful engagement of the two.

Furthermore, I would not claim at any stage to have attempted to apply these perspectives in any pure form. Each one comes to be my version of them. There is no agreed doctrine behind these perspectives - there is no requirement to be a respector of labels. They serve only as theoretic and methodological resources to be placed in dialectical relation to questions about the phenomena under consideration. In that sense I am not concerned with any notion of an accurate portrayal of these perspectives even if any criteria to judge such accuracy exist.

Underlying these broader perspectival movements remained a continued interest in a more specific conceptualisation. This acted as a sounding-board and an orienting frame for both theoretic perambulations and for reflections on the data. It was taken up quite early on and retained quite doggedly. It was constantly held up to both data and theoretic development in a mutual testing out - a dynamic in which each draws on the other.

In doing this I was following the advice of Fred Davis (1974). He proposes that when considering one's data one is in fact saying 'what is the story here?' What he further goes on to point out is that there already exist in the sociological literature countless 'sociological stories' (he gives Durkheim's 'story' about suicide and Weber's story of the 'routinization of charisma' as two examples).

He suggests, then, that it is useful (and indeed what most sociologists in fact do) to consider if any of these 'stories' fits one's own data. Find a story that seems appropriate, that has some alignment with the data, and the, Davis urges, "I would suggest you begin fearlessly by trying to 'impose' it upon the data." (p.311) The 'story' provides at least an opening, "a beginning working strategem with respect to the data" (p.311). Clearly one is not irretrievably committed to that particular story thereafter, nor need one be confined to considering the applicability of only one story. Indeed Davis recognises that it would be foolish to expect a proper 'fit', but hopefully the story will illuminate the data, and, as he states:

> "...the disjunction of imposition begins to generate an internal dialectic in which the story illuminates the data, and the data modifies the story."
>
> (ibid p.312)

That sort of creative dialectic I view as extremely useful in terms of developing an understanding of the social setting one is dealing with. The interplay between theory and data is, of course, of crucial methodological concern and any conscious awareness of the process is of value.

The story I adopted, which seemed appropriate at the time and has continued to play a dynamic role,is the old sociological story of 'the definition of the situation'. Clearly other stories have been read and used at different stages, but this was seen as a nice and a credible story and has retained a place throughout. The particular story is obviously embedded to some degree in the larger volume of Symbolic Interactionism but can stand abstraction from that context.

Before proceeding to examine that story some more general comments need to be made in relation to the starting point of this section. I report here some thoughts pertaining to the definition of the situation even though some aspects of the story as it already

existed in the sociological literature were later found to not 'fit' well with the data or with emerging theory as the research process continued. However, I declared a desire and a commitment to allow this thesis to reflect the research process. In this section and the next I explore the theoretical and methodological trajectory that that process entailed. That trajectory is also partially mirrored in the subsequent presentation and analysis of data. That is to say the treatment of the data to a degree follows that movement from a descriptive ethogenic account, that is loosely in the mode of some symbolic interactionist perspectives, to a more overt attempt to apply some of the conceptualisation derived from the post-structuralist perspective. I will not deny that the account here has also been cleaned-up to some extent - but there are some obvious injunctions to coherence and clarity.

The Importance of the Story

I take as the legitimate starting point of the story to be a neat statement made by W.I. Thomas in 1937:

> "Preliminary to any self-determined act of behaviour there is always a stage of examination and deliberation which we may call the definition of the situation."
>
> (W.I. Thomas 1937 p.42)

There are certain contentious words and phrases within that statement, not least the implied notion that the definition of the situation is to be thought of as some internal and stable cognition of the individual. But it is the aim of this section to explore some of those issues so I propose to leave the statement intact at this point.

Thomas' more famous statement that could stand as a root-maxim for the Pragmatists and is invariably at least footnoted in most text books on Symbolic Interactionism, is, "If men define their situations as real, they are real in their consequences." The

philosophical position of pragmatism need not concern us here but we need to be aware of the conceptual background to the particular story under consideration. But on the basis of this statement it is apparent that the definition of the situation is primary, a precursor to action (definitions as motivational? definitions as vocabularies of motive?). An individual's behaviour in any particular situation is seen as a function of how he or she defines the situation. To define a situation is spoken of as the ability to present it to oneself symbolically, so that it can be treated reflexively and an interpretation and an action constructed as a result of that reflexive process. This is immediately in opposition to the behaviouristic and mechanistic notions of passive response to external (or even internal) stimuli. The 'objective' world does not impinge directly on the consciousness of the individual - it does not represent itself purely to a merely receptive ego-giving rise directly to a response. Rather it is interpreted through the intermediary of symbolic representation (or interpreted via signs if we rehearse here later arguments). It is not necessary to assert the possible non-existence of an objective world of things, merely that the simple facticity of things is of no assistance and is in a sense irrelevant in terms of understanding human behaviour in that situation. R.K. Merton (1968) summarises this position:

> "The first part of the Thomus Theorum provides an unceasing reminder that men respond not only to the objective features of a situation, but also and at times, primarily to the meaning this situation has for them . Once they have assigned some meaning to the situation, their consequent behaviour, and some of those consequences are determined by the ascribed meanings."
>
> (pp.475-6)

I would seek to modify that statement by maintaining that individuals only respond through finding meaning. The 'sometimes' becomes always: people always act in relation to the meaning the situation has for them. As Perinbanayagam (1974) has it:

> "...whether one is responding to an objective feature in nature, abstract features in nature, or to other selves as well as to one's own self, one is responding to meanings. In other words, one is always defining situations and responding to such situations - one is condemned, so to speak, to a world of meanings."
>
> (p.523)

The conceptual link between definition of the situation and meaning is clearly revealed here. It is that link that is to become a preoccupation in this thesis. McHugh (1968) goes even further with the, for me, prophetic declaration that, "The definition of the situation is the sociological notion analogous to the more general one of meaning." (p.50)

To understand how people define situations, then, is to understand how they construct meaning (or perhaps we might want to say (later), how something means). If one can access meanings then behaviour in situations becomes more intelligible. In studying behaviour in social settings, we are in fact then studying the meanings those settings have for the individuals participating and interacting within them.

How important is this to our general understanding of human behaviour? How important is it to know how situations are defined? What portion of the human behavioural arena does the notion 'situation' cover? Cardwell, J.D. (1971) has no doubts at all "...all human behaviour is situation oriented - that is, human behaviour takes place within the context of a given situation" (p.37). The notion of situation is also of prime importance in Goffman's approach (see Goffman 1959 especially). But more than being 'situation oriented', defining situa-

tions is to be able to represent the situation to oneself symbolically and thereby to locate meaning in it, and further still, if we agree with Mead and others (notably Blumer, H. see 1965 and 1969) that action is the embodiment of meaning, then clearly, to understand definitions of situations is fundamental.

Man, then, on this conception, actively interprets his environment, he creatively responds to it. For the symbolic interactionists the ability to assign meanings to events is learned socially - it is learned and re-enacted in interaction with others. It is learnt initially in the socialisation process. In one sense then, 'meanings are given to men by their society and the past societies that preceded it' (Silverman 1970, p.130). Certain modes of discourse become 'institutionalised' and hence meanings become embodied in particular institutional positions or roles. And as Parsons (1951) points out this leads to certain expectations in relation to particular roles and particular situations. It is through the process of socialisation that people learn the expectations so embodied. 'They conform to them because these expectations become part of their definitions of themselves' (Silverman idid. p.131) or are 'internalised' as Parsons has it.

Silverman proceeds to another important point that again is a precursor of the theoretical development of this thesis (and indeed marks itself in the same way in terms of the development of Silverman's own thinking - compare Silverman 1970 to Silverman and Torode 1980). He reiterates the embeddedness of meanings in past and present societal arrangements but goes on to say:

> "Social reality is 'pre-defined' in the very language in which we are socialised. Language provides us with categories which define as well as distinguish our experiences. Language allows us to define the typical features of the social world and the typical acts of typical actors - it gives us a set of what Schutz

(1964) calls 'typifications'."

(Silverman 1970 p.132)

From the perspective of socialisation the link between referent and symbol is said not to reside inherently in the mind or to be a nature feature of reality, rather it is cultural. Symbol learning goes on, throughout ones life, in a social setting. We can only learn to assign relevant meanings to symbols via our social involvement; we can only learn to define situations in the continuing interchange with others.

Versions of the Story

One of the problems with this 'story' is that it is diffuse, incomplete and where it is clearly written has several authors who haven't agreed on the plot.

It is widely recognised in much sociological and social psychological literature as an important 'story'. Reference to it is frequently made in that literature but rarely is the story retold or developed. It often appears that the provision of the title is taken as sufficient as if we all know the detail of the story. Consequently the full story has only rarely been fully articulated. Social psychological and sociological texts are content to index the story and rely on its commonsense or mythical value to convey any meaning.

As Stebbins, R. (1967) rightly points out even the component 'situation', an even more widely used term, has a singularly indefinite character. Even Thomas, he points out employs that term in a variety of different ways. Stebbins attempts a distinction between the 'objective situation' as :

> "...the immediate social and physical surroundings and the current physiological and psychological state of the actor" (p.150).

He also cites MacIver, R.M. (1942) who puts it thus:

> "the situation as it might appear to some omniscient and disinterested eye, viewing all its complex inter-dependencies and all its endless contingencies."

I am not at all sure of the value of this distinction. Even if such a thing as an 'objective situation' can be posited, it is not clear what relevance, if any, it has for social action and it is certainly not clear how one could ever access it (Stebbins makes the curious suggestion that it can be operationalised as either "the social scientist's picture of the objective situation in which the actor finds himself" or as some aggregate constructed from the revealed collective individual subjective situations!).

The subjective situation is defined in terms of those features of the objective situation that are "seen by the actor to affect any one of his action orientations and therefore must be given meaning before he can act" (p.150). He makes much,then, of the notion of selective perception. He also has an overly rational view of definitions and the boundaries of situations being determined by the purposes (action orientations) that individuals bring to the situation ("One's subjective situation is constructed around this orientation, and it will last as long as it takes to manipulate the relevant situational elements towards this end". p.152).

The notion of situation has perhaps received the most extensive treatment in the work of E. Goffman (see especially 1963 and 1959). But as with many of Goffman's concepts it gets its meaning from its place in the overall text, from its assorted actual uses in passim and is not defined in any simple, clear-cut manner.

If 'situation' itself is a confused notion, then 'definition of the situation' has received even less explicit coverage and where its parameters are articulated there is not much agreement. Apart

from Thomas's own presentations (1951 & 1937; and with Znaniecki 1927) other major theoretical considerations of the notion include those by MacIver (1942), Newcomb, T.M. et al (1965), Vernon, G.M. (1965), and Znaniecki, F. (1952). More recently, significant if varied contributions have been made by Ball, D. (1972), Perinbanayagam, R.S. (1974); Stebbins himself (1967, 1969). McHugh, P. (1968) provides a comprehensive development that tends towards an ethnomethodological perspective. Waller, W. (1961) provides some theoretical treatment in his consideration of teaching practices.

In the second Stebbins paper (1969) he also draws our attention to the absence of research that "focuses on the definitions of specific situations by groups of actors as explanations for the behaviour of these actors in the immediate environment" (p.193). My own extensive search bears out this observation, I have only been able to locate about a dozen pieces of work that explicitly employ 'definition of the situation' centrally in the research problematic. I do not intend to review those in any depth here but some comments are in order.

A number of studies have sought to explicate a relationship between definitions of the situation and trouble. That is the place of definitions as ordering and meaning-giving devices in problematic situations. McHugh specifically manipulates a laboratory situation to introduce a potentially anomic atmosphere - he then observes how individuals actively attempt to create meaning where it is seemingly absent - how they come to define an extremely problematic situation. Ball-Rokeach (1973) relates definition of the situation to 'pervasive ambiguity' - the latter occurring when there is a failure to adequately define situations. Pervasive ambiguity is only resolved when some proposed definition comes to be accepted. More interestingly, in view of later developments here, she refers to

ambiguity as an inability to find meaningful relational links and the inability to identify the contextual meaning of the situation. There is much in common between McHugh and Ball-Rokeach here.

In similar vein, S. Shindler (1976) tries to deal with the definition of situations in the problematic relation between various social health and welfare professionals and their clients. This could be re-cast as the problem of the negotiation of diagnosis and treatment (c.f. Scheff, 1973).

Two other studies draw on the work of Waller (1961) and treat of the struggle to retain particular definitions in the classroom situation. Teachers and pupils are seen as in some way competing to have their definitions accepted. The notion of competing definitions I take to be significant. The studies also re-emphasise that, even though certain roles and relationships are institutionalised, they still require constant definitional work. Poskocil (1977) employs definition of the situation in a loose and unexplicated manner but draws attention again to the fact that in institutions we tend to assume there is a common and shared definition of what is going on when in fact there may be many different and even contradictory and competing definitions present. Stebbins' (1970) study links back to the previous group since he is concerned with definitions by teachers and others of disorderly behaviour in the classroom.

Two other studies also relate defining situations to conflict. Holsti's (1970) study is an attempt to relate individual differences in definition of the situation to its effect on international conflict. The actions of individual policy makers and foreign policy negotiators should be seen at the individual level in terms of how they define the situation. Blake (1977) embeds his version of definition of the situation in an account of the emergence of a strike and how that strike and related phenomena are defined through time and

across situations.

Blake touches on the place of rhetoric in the definitional process,something which is explored more fully by Rubin et al (1975) in his study of student politics in the 1960's. They site an important quote from Stone and Farberman (1970):

> "Reality construction occurs as individuals attempt to achieve and maintain meaningful exchanges. Usually people hammer out a working consensus or an agreed-upon version of reality, but not before they bargain for the specific version of reality (definition of the situation) they would prefer to see legitimated (Goffman, 1959; Weinstein 1969)."

Rubin et al take up the point about competing definitions and the battle for legitimation and turn their attention to the "effectiveness of different rhetorical styles in influencing the definition of the situation" (p.497). This is again an important signal for later concerns in this thesis.

Of the others, Deutscher (1964) simply sought to describe how American couples defined post-parental life by asking them. Du Wors (1962) used it quite sophisticatedly as a means of distinguishing social units. He argues that the basic social process is that of evaluative interaction. Social units are distinguishable by the kinds of situations they evaluate. The defined response of similar units to the same type of situation will show variations which enable one to distinguish each unit from others in the category. He particularly relates different definitions of situations to groups value systems. Cochran (1978) using a version of Kelly's repertory grid method (see Slater, 1964) tried to examine if there was any correlation between persons 'implicit personality theory' and their ways of defining situations. Lerner and Beckers' title perhaps speaks for itself: "Interpersonal Choice as a function of Ascribed Similarity and Definition of the Situation" (1962). Finally Raymond Gorden (1952)

tried to experimentally explore the "relationships between a person's private opinion and his definition of the situation and how they affect his expression of public opinion in a social situation."(p.50).

In many of these studies definition of the situation was employed in ways I have already indicated, as an already established story, understood, shared and in no need of further theoretic elaboration (McHugh, Stebbins and to an extent Ball-Rokeach, are exceptions). In any case one could not readily glean from these studies a cohesive and reproducable approach to definition of the situation. Stebbins (1969) in reviewing some of the earlier studies concludes that it has been "either inadequately operationalised" or "(they) have considered as the situation to be defined something far larger and less specific than a typical instance of ongoing social interaction." (p.193) (He also notes McHugh as a notable exception.)

An Elaboration and Critique of the Story

But we need to return to some of the theoretical dilemmas. A number of points of difficulty will be explored in what is to follow drawing on the theoretical and empirical work outlined thus far.

For instance, there exists in the literature some confusion as to whether a definition of the situation is developed independently by each individual, or whether it emerges in the interaction process. Does the concept refer to the meanings ascribed to a particular setting by each individual involved, or does it refer to some kind of collective abstraction? The distinction is partially covered by Stone and Farberman's (1970) notion of " 'mentalistic' or 'culturological' phenomena (p.147). Do definitions belong to an individual consciousness or are they like Stebbins conglomeration of individual perceptions that in totality can be labelled 'the definition

of the situation'. Some of the preceding writers clearly seem to imply that it is something that an individual accomplishes in isolation, possibly prior to actual social engagement in the situation. Perinbanayagam (1974) even interprets Thomas's work in this way although that interpretation is perhaps debatable - Thomas was certainly exercised by the cultural impact on definitions.

The work of Schutz (1962 & 1964) appears to indicate that the interpretation of situations is an entirely individual process. Not in the sense of that the individual fails to take account of others, but that any definition attained is self-generated and not the result of an interactive process. Such a view does not recognise a dynamic, processual relationship to be in operation. Perinbanayagam criticises Schutz for this individualistic/mentalistic approach. He maintains that Schutz's thesis leaves the recipient of a communication as a passive receiver, "...with no capacity or voluntariness left to participate in the definition of the situation and the creation of meaning" (p.526). We are provided with an image of isolated, 'subjective intelligences' acting in the world on the basis of individual perceptions and definitions, ascribing personalised meanings to social settings. Other existencies are recognised, even taken account of, but they are not viewed as participating in a constitutive construction of reality and meaning. The <u>self</u> is the prime focus, a unilateral agent making his own sense of the world. Perinbanayagam, again referring to Schutz: "The self is said to constitute the world and not participate in its constitution with other people." (p.527)

Some writers, then, want to say that the definition of the situation refers to the result of an <u>interactional</u> process. The definition has a collective (abstractive?) quality to which each participant makes a contribution. Perinbanayagam, following Goffman, puts it thus:-

> "Interactions and definitions of the situations are not what S believes is true of the situation, but are syntactical activities engaged in by two or more persons."

One might want to question the lumping together of 'interactions' and 'definitions' as if their parameters were the same, but the implication is that definitions of the situation are embodied in the interactional process. They are revealed by the social activities themselves; they do not reside in the individual. One might go on here and say that definitions of situations are revealed in their use, and even further in their use in language (perhaps hinted at by the employment of Goffman's 'syntactical relations'). Perinbanayagam is more concerned, however, with the interactional and emergent qualities of definitions. Definitions emerge from a reciprocal taking-account of others present in the situation. Again drawing on Goffman, he emphasises that the way one presents oneself is a function of certain expectancies one has about the other(s), and certain expectancies one has about the expectancies of the other about oneself. He further takes the phenomenological line that individuals seek to reveal their intentions and identities to those others present in order that a meaningful interaction can proceed. He does also, though, accept the pragmatist viewpoint that even if that presentation is profferred as a disguise and hides one's 'true intentions', "the ensuing interactions will be based on whatever it is that the respondent takes to be the others identity etc..." (p.532). The retention of 'intentions' at this point is a point of contention taken up later.

It has been suggested (Lauer & Handel 1977) that individuals construct a preliminary definition of the situation <u>prior</u> to entering the social setting. Such a definition is not based on any evidence available in the interaction situation,but rather on information that is available before the interaction starts. Clearly such evidence is based

upon past experiences or upon secondhand information, or an assumed common stock of knowledge. Historically we know that certain behaviours typically pertain to certain settings, that certain individuals will be present and that they will act in certain ways. Furthermore, we know that certain expectations are held about the mode in which we should act in that setting. Being culturally and/or personally familiar with a vast range of settings we are able to anticipate with varying degrees of detail, the nature of the awaited interaction. We can begin to predict what will occur and to plan our own involvement, set our goals for that situation, work out strategies and speculate on outcomes.

Now it is clear that we all undertake this practice frequently, the question under consideration is whether it should be conceptualised in terms of defining the situation or whether we follow Perinbanayagam and maintain that the concept only be applied to the facets of the interaction process itself. We might want to conclude that the concept can usefully apply in both instances. But the differences between a notion of a preliminary definition of the situation and that of 'syntactical relations' embodying a definition of the situation are perhaps too great to allow an umbrella term - at least in the way presented by the two protagonists here. In as far as definition of the situation refers to meanings I feel we must follow Perinbanayagam, at least at this point. However, the dilemma cannot readily be resolved without some consideration of the temporal dimensions of definitions of the situation. The confusion may lie in considering it as a static, discrete, completed phenomena.

Does a definition of the situation ever reach decisive completion; again there is some confusion in the literature. Some authors (e.g. Cardwell 1971) propose that its a constantly emerging phenomena:

> "Definition of the situation is a process and continues throughout the duration of the interaction situation, as new experiences, concepts, individuals, or spatial and temporal factors become known or learned by the individual."

Although its emergent nature is confined to the interaction setting. His position vis-a-vis the dilemma outlined above, however, is somewhat ambiguous. He seems to allow for purely individual definitions of the situation, but in other sections to insist that it resides in a consensus achieved between the interactants. A partial solution is provided by his notion of 'synthesization', as the crucial operation in developing a definition. 'Synthesization' involves relating both the physical and structural attributes of the situation and our organised experiences, in the form of developed value definitions and associated plans of action, that we bring to the situation. Unfortunately, he says little here about the impact of others (unless they be included under 'physical attributes') or of the inter-action process. The implication is that the definition of the individual is not a precursor to action, but requires the integration of presuppositions and plans with aspects of the interactional setting once entered. He goes on to talk about the "accuracy of the definition of the situation for any particular individual..." (p.40), clearly putting emphasis on the individual again; on a "psychologistic epistemology" (Perinbanayagam p.533). For Cardwell it is a question of 'taking account': on the basis of learned procedures, past experiences, various conceptual schemes available to the individual, one takes account of physical and structural factors in the situation, including those others present. Having taken account one reflects on the mix, looks for some areas of 'fit'; one "synthesises these factors and brings them to bear on the situation" (p.40).

So with Cardwell we don't have a clear definition outlined prior to entering the setting, but rather does the 'definition' reside in the situated actions emerging in the interaction process. What we have is an individual who approaches the setting with various possible conceptual schemes including situational goals and value definitions and a background of expectancies based on cultural and personal experiences. With this sort of frame reference he enters the situation and allows facets of it, including others present, to integrate with those preconceptions. Defining the situation is never complete throughout the interaction, there is a '...succession of adjustments to interpretations of what is going on in the situation.' His talk of reading a consensual definition hints at a collectivist viewpoint, his talk of the accuracy of individuals hints at an individualist viewpoint.

The notion of a continuously emerging definition has a certain sense, but it is difficult to see how individuals make sense of social settings without some discretive element. If we accept the motion that social settings generally are in a constant state of flux, that the meanings aren't inherent in situations but are constructed in the interaction process, then definitions of situations one may suspect, needs reflect that flux, and themselves be constantly changing; always becoming never being. Certainly if we accept the Goffmanesque conception of definitions, then we are virtually forced to acquiesce to that position. If the definition of the situation is made manifest in the situated actions of interacting individuals then it must have a correspondence with the fluctuating nature of those actions. The individualist stance is not bound to such a view. Individuals are not required to show compliance with that sort of logic. They are entitled to make irrational definitions quite independently of the internal logic of interactional settings. There is no reason why an individual

cannot place an artificially disjunctive definition on a continuing social act. The individual can and certainly does in his accounting activities, make time divisible into units of his choice. This enables him then to say, that, at this moment in time 'my definition of this situation is...' even though the situation is at the very moment of utterance, in all probability, changing. But that raises the issue of whether the account of the individual's definition of the situation is being 'used' by him in his actions or whether it is epiphenomenal to his actual operating definition. The debate as to the status of accounts in relation to behaviour and cognitive acts will not be discussed here, although clearly there are those who advise the study of accounts in their own right and who urge that they not be treated as epiphenomena (see Lyman and Scott 1970 and Harre 1979). Each utterance itself becomes part of the situation - in the strongest form the accounts themselves are the situation that requires explanation, they are not seen as a mere comment on a prior state of affairs (see Silverman and Jones (1976)).

Goffman's treatment of the definition of the situation (as portrayed by Perinbanayagam) is entirely synthetic. It is an abstraction made by an observer (researcher) of a whole social setting who infers it from the observed 'syntactical relations' apparent in the milieux of the social acts taking place in that setting. The definitions are not the property of individuals or groups of individuals participating in the setting. But, referring to Goffman directly, he also talks about interactions as a process whereby each actor proposes certain definitions of the situation to the other. They are either accepted or rejected or modified in an interplay of presentations until the interaction is able to proceed on the basis of a derived 'working consensus' has been achieved, or the interaction is prematurely terminated. The temporal position of the 'working consensus' remains a problematic.

It is already clear that the story is confused; the definition of the situation is conceptualised in a variety of ways, some of which are incompatible with others. Is it acceptable to subsume these, assuredly valuable conceptualisations, under the general rubric of 'definition of the situation'? Perhaps there is a certain power in the ambiguity; K. Burke points to the force of dialectical meanings (Burke 1945). Concepts are not always more powerful through being straight-jacketed, their play in different relations adds rather than necessarily detracts from their meaning potential. It may not be necessary to throw up one's arms in confusion and advocate the discarding of the label. It certainly appears to have some intrinsic appeal in its wording. Perhaps it is sufficient only to be clear at each point in what relation it is being employed - if we are talking about preliminary definitions then let's be clear; if we are talking about consensual definitions emerging from the interactional process, then that too must be made apparent.

However, let us go at it again. What strikes me is a distinction between what might be termed a theoretic conception of definition of the situation and a pragmatic conception. The theoretic conception wants to see it as processual, emergent, continuing - a synthetic construction by professional theorizers. But it is also proposed as a real activity in social affairs. On that basis it might be viewed as a pragmatic compulsion on the part of persons to attain fixity, order and 'closure'. Just as later we shall see that there is a theoretic treatment of language that presents it as permanently productive, at 'play', meaning proliferating; and a pragmatic realisation that in using language people <u>do</u> attempt to hold that productivity, to stem the proliferation, to stop 'playing; and present authoritative, single meanings. On the pragmatic account definitions of situations can be

seen as practical accomplishments, as, say, rhetorical strategies or interpretive practice, as a point of closure on the potentially proliferating possible accounts of events and situations. That distinction can be seen in terms of a confusion of the 'sociologically' useful with the 'pragmatically' useful; the sort of argument pursued by some of the ethnomethodologists (see Garfinkel 1962; Zimmerman and Pollner 1975, for instance).

Since the purpose of a 'definition' is to bring clarity and a degree of exactitude,one might be tempted to pursue the pragmatic role and suggest that definitions of situations must be capable of being held static in discrete moments of time. They must be, to some degree, able to bring distinctiveness and order to an ever changing environment. To be really 'sociologically' useful, perhaps the concept needs to be seen in terms of a 'model' individuals temporarily hold of the environment, or perhaps as a particular discursive frame that serves as a means of providing familiar positions of intelligibility in relation to things and encountered in the situation. As McHugh (1968) points out whilst discussing 'Authorship" (one of the components of his concept 'emergence') there is a positive search for patterns, and in particular patterns of signification.

Under the notion of 'Theme', McHugh further maintains that people assume that they will be able to locate meaning in the events they are involved (this links to the more primal psychological notion of the 'effort after meaning' in memory and 'perceptual hypothesis' - see Ebbinghaus, A. 1885 and R.L. Greogry 1966 and 1970). The 'model' (frame, hypothesis) must enable individuals to step back from the constant ebb and flow and to temporarily reach some tentative conclusion, attain a certain order and a partial closing. On this account a partially fixed preliminary definition relating to a particular situation is held up rather like a template, against events and tested out for a 'fit'.

Definitions, then, may be retained in some vaguely stable form until aspects of it are challenged by unaccounted for factors in the situation. However, given the potential variability, even uniqueness of social settings, no preliminary definition is going to be sufficiently encompassing, and modification in some form seems inevitable. It might then be a question of how definitive we attempt to make our definition, or how inclusive. The more problematic the situation the less 'accurate' the template is likely to be, our definitions may then be in only broad parameters. The more familiar the setting the greater the chance of the applicability of an existing frame, the finer the tuning of the definition.

McHugh's (1968) treatment of the temporal and spatial dimensions of the concept differs somewhat from some of the considerations touched on above. His notion of 'emergence' for instance, '.... concerns the temporal dimension of activity, wherein past, present and future are analytically distinct and, at the same time inextricable, for they are not correspondingly distinct in their influence upon concrete behaviour' (p.24). In other words a definition of a current situation emerges from the synthesis of past influences, future inferences symbolically with relevant aspects of the present. Understanding a social setting is, for the individual, a question of discovering patterns in the flux, in discovering order and thereby meaning. The actor searches for 'homologies' that are felt to 'underlie' the current activities; to do this a process of relating past interpretations, and future expectations to present circumstances is undertaken.

> "As patterns are discovered they are 'documented' by the actor in his immediate on-going situations, thus allowing him to integrate temporally discrete events by giving them a baseline of meaning, and, thereby, to ascribe order to the general environment."
>
> (p.33)

People make assumptions about the meaning of future events, in particular they assume that they will be able to make sense of future events they observe. They also tend to assume that things will occur in the future in ways similar to the way they occurred in the past. Thus the past is felt to sensibly inform the future, allowing individuals to routinise their environment and thereby to bring a notion of order. Thus individuals are both future and past oriented, 'Each of these orientations folds back as an actors description of the present' (p.37).

McHugh elaborates the concept of emergence and makes some important conceptual and methodological points. However, I do not wish to pursue his thesis in detail here, although I do expect to refer to his notion of relativity subsequently.

Definitions of the situation, it has been suggested, are processual and dynamic, but may be capable of being held static for discrete portions of time. It is clear that one does not continue to define situations in a similar way throughout ones life, nor even throughout a specific situation. Lauer and Handel (1977) maintain that modes of definitions of situations will change in two ways; firstly, one will change the way one defines situation, '...in accord with the process of one's self' (as the self develops). Secondly, one may alter definitions within the course of a particular interaction process. This indicates that the individual may hold a definition in some degree of fixity for discrete units of time, but that definitions also emerge in the interaction process. Definitions alter not simply because an individual wishes them to, but they also develop independently through social action. "Definitions change in the course of interaction both by design and as an unanticipated consequence of the interaction." (Lauer & Handel p.87). I shall return to the notion of definitions being capable of change by designs subsequently.

One reason definitions alter in interactional settings is because of the awareness participants have of others. Each brings an individual definition, including certain expectancies about the behaviour of others in that setting. But once actually in the setting each can begin to assess others definitions of the situation, to see how they match with one's own, and how one's original model has anticipated the situation. There is an inevitable bias to see the situation in terms of one's own definition, one is likely to perceive and take account of these aspects of the situation that confirm one's original definition. Cardwell (1971) uses the old psychological term 'selective perception' in this sense. He further maintains that the range of definitions available to us in any given situation is a function of the conceptual schemes the individual brings to the situation, the degree of conceptual sophistication that one is able to bring to bear on the situation. Two crucial such conceptual schemes are said to be one's organised system of value definitions and associated plans of action.

The notion of intention is reintroduced here, embodied in person's presented definitions. They must in some way be made reciprocally available in the interaction if they are to be realised in the interactional setting. Members need to take account of others intended courses of action, to see if they compare with the original expectations. A member's preliminary definition would include expectations of others behaviour, and any formulated plans would take those expectancies into account, such that one's own intended actions are compatible with the expected actions of others. It is suggested that it is necessary for the member to display in some way his intentions to others, to allow them to accommodate their behaviour towards those ends. It becomes

in some ways a strategic exercise, an effort to perpetrate one's own designs; one may seek to proffer one's own definition of the situation, including one's definition of the others and achieve an ascendency over other's proposed definitions. There is a sense then, in which if one defines one's own position in the situation with sufficient clarity, one is simultaneously defining a reciprocal position for other(s). The essential point is illustrated by Weinstein and Deutschberger (1964):

> "The moment-to-moment articulation of any given interaction is determined not only by the way in which each participant defines the situation for himself at successive moments, but, more crucially, by the extent to which the participants structure the situation for each other's perception... This grants that individuals are neither passive nor entirely powerless in their relationships with one another, and that each participant attempts to exercise his own direction over the flow of the interaction."
>
> (p.452-3)

As they point out, at the onset of any interaction there exists a variety of possible outcomes that exist potentially in the sum of the goals and intentions each individual brings to the situation, and the rules each is prepared to follow in reaching these goals. The dynamic of the definitional process is revealed by the move to the resolution of this interactional dilemma, and the realisation of a particular outcome which '...depends upon a progressive narrowing down of the possibilities for each actor in terms of the responses he <u>can</u> make in accord with his definition of the situation.' (Weinstein & Deutschberger p.453). Clearly, it is the processes by means of which this 'narrowing' down occurs that is of vital interest.

Most authors are in agreement that for interaction to proceed with order and meaning it is necessary for a degree of consensus to prevail amongst the various actors' definitions of the situation.

Although individuals bring their own preliminary definitions to the situation, for continued interaction, and especially if the purpose of interaction is some shared task, then a collectivist form of definition must emerge. A definition of the situation needs to develop that each interactant can share in to some extent. Before I address this issue directly, there are a number of other issues upon which consensus depends, which need to be attended to first. For consensus to be possible in the first place, we need to understand the relation of people's very awareness of others to the development of definitions. We further need to know, how, being aware of others, individuals seek to present themselves, how this affects the development of consensual definitions, and how it reciprocally defines others. The relationship between roles and definitions of the situation requires some brief analysis. Lastly, we need to consider the processes by which consensus is or is not evolved; the strategies employed; the implied process of negotiation and the nature of constraints upon types of definitions.

"Behaviour relative to a situation typically is directed toward those other individuals present, either physically or symbolically, in the situation." (Cardwell (1971) p.44) Thus we can expect awareness of others to greatly influence any definition of the situation we may develop. Perinbanayagam (1974 p.534), following Weber (1947) puts it thus: "Action is oriented by the account the actor takes of the other, the actor is aware of the other and trims and contours his conduct accordingly." In order to act in a social setting we need to take account of those others present, we need to include others in our definition of the situation both in our preliminary definitions and most certainly in the interactional enactment itself. In an interactional encounter we seek to obtain information about others present, in order to see if they conform to our definitions, or to see how

behaviour can be in accord with those others. The information we obtain about others will influence any definition emerging from the interactional setting. Information about others may be obtained prior to engagement in interaction, we may have some prior role conceptions, we may have been told about the individual(s), or we may have interacted with them on a previous occasion. Goffman in this respect has this to say:

> "Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them, and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response to him."
>
> (1959, p.1)

The mutual disclosure and seeking of information aids each participant to further or confirm the definition he holds and to act accordingly. Perinbanayagam maintains that individuals actively seek to make clear to others present exactly what their intentions are. One might suggest that this is too naive a view, since common sense tells us that individuals often seek to disguise their actual intentions. The real point is that individuals must seek to present <u>some</u> definition to others present if an interaction is to proceed. If one party failed to impart any information to others present then an interaction would not take place. In reality, of course, since individuals are actively searching for a social meaning in the other's presence in that social setting, there is inevitability some transference of meaning. Given that reality, interacting individuals rapidly learn that they have some <u>control</u> over the information, about themselves, their intentions and definitions, that they convey. They also soon learn that it is usually in their own interests to exert such control and to regulate facets of themselves that they present to others.

Individuals then promote an image of themselves that is in accordance with their aspirations in that setting. This notion is crucial to the dramaturgical perspective as Perinbanayagam (p.535) reminds us "...the actor becomes aware of the other, as well as the other's subjective 'experiences' only to the extent that these experiences are dramaturgically available.", that is, to the extent that they are presented for the perusal of one's interactional public. He continues: "Interaction proceeds on the basis of whatever it is that one takes to be the other's subjective experience and to the extent that neither the other nor 'brute facts' challenge what one takes to be the case, an on-going definition of the situation has been negotiated" (p.535). Certain presentations of self, will lead others to define the situation with regard to that presentation, and thereby act accordingly. Presentation of self thus affects definition, by controlling one's presentation one can seek to control social action.

How, then, do we come to define others, how exactly do we take account of them and their 'subjective' and 'objective' experiences? A traditional answer lies in the notion of role-taking (see Turner 1962). We seek to take the role of others in the situation, to stand in their shoes, to see things as they see them, to consider how they would define the situation. An individual's reference group may also aid in the way a person defines others in the situation. Indeed reference groups may be a more pervasive influence on the way people define situations in general. But they probably only provide a broad frame of reference, an initial basis for defining the situation, any such definition would likely be modified in the course of interaction. As Lauer and Handel have it: "The reference group provides a socially organised basis for a person's values in a form that allows their use as a tool for evaluating possible courses of action and definitions of the situation." (p.131)

Each individual is actively promoting some self-image, one that presumably is in tandem with their definition of the situation. Others in the situation are thereby provided with explicit information as to how that individual wishes to be seen, and to be defined by the others in that situation. The individual's presentation also indicates to some extent how he defines others present. If individuals occupy roles of a formal nature or roles that others are familiar with, then information is quite simply conveyed, it may simply be a question of monitoring to see that the individual does not engage in actions that indicate that he has defined the situation as one where that role is no longer operative. We may define others in relation to our own intentions in the situation, only taking account of those roles or possible roles that may have implications for our plans. Or we may define others in a more generalised way. In the particular setting we may become aware of other possible roles the individual may hold beyond our particular plans for their use. We may impute a stereotyped self to the other on the basis of the role(s) they are currently enacting. Goffman emphasises this phenomena of imputing 'entire' selves on the basis of individual role performance. He uses the term 'situated identities' in this context; on the basis of particular roles we expect people to be certain types or sorts of people in a general sense.

It is the projected image we each present in situations that is the major means by which others define individuals. Since we know we assess others presentations, we realise that others are constantly judging our own appearances, so we may then plan and control our own appearances strategically. We can anticipate the kind of responses certain appearances will generate. In this sense we may seek to project a 'situated identity' of our own to others. As Lauer & Handel (p.107) state: "situated identities are expressed in appearances and

that the response of others is affected by them." Our initial definitions lead us to certain expectations of how others expect us to behave, and also to anticipate what actions may aid in the achievement of our interactional goals. Thus our definition leads us to adopt a certain style in the encounter, a certain presentation of self. At the same time such a presentation may be designed to influence others, to make it clear to them how we wish to be perceived and possibly even to confine the possible ways available to them for defining us and the situation generally. We may further seek to limit the available ways they have of defining themselves, since in some ways the way we define ourselves has implications for the way others may define themselves in that setting (c.f. with the notion of alter-casting. See Weinstein and Deutschberger 1963). Again the development of a presentational self may take place prior to entering the episode, but it will surely be modified in the light of the process of interaction as others presentations of self impinge on our original definitions.

Thus we have a picture of individuals entering a setting with definitions that include various goals and intentions, and which give rise to more or less strategic modes of presenting a certain appearance. In certain situations role relations may be fairly closely defined, and enable each participant to predict fairly accurately the nature of the transpiring interaction. But, as McCall (1970) says, while role relations do not <u>rigidly</u> define the content of an interaction, they do constrain its form (p.5). So inevitably there is some problematic in every interactional setting. Each individual brings his own definition of the situation, the degree of consensus between these is important to each individual, and will probably become apparent as the interaction proceeds. As already indicated, initial definitions

may be accurately based on past experiences or knowledge of formal role relations, so that each shares similar expectations; definitions may then be reasonably compatible and the encounter may proceed reasonably smoothly. But as Blumer (1962) points out, even in highly institutionalised situations, where action is repetitive and predictably correlated with expectancies, the interpretative process must continue to operate. (p.145-6)

Given that there is the likelihood of a conflict of definitions, things may subsequently proceed in a number of different ways. Firstly, the interaction may be terminated. Such a decision will probably depend on how important individual's goals are and alternative means available for achieving them. Secondly, one party's definition of the situation may be accepted by those others present. As Goffman makes clear in 'On Face Work' (1967), sometimes others definitions of the situation may be an improvement on one's own. Individuals may be in such a position that they may accept the definition of others, even when its disappointing to them. Perhaps, more commonly, individuals may seek to further their own definitions, to impose their own on the situation. Others are then obliged either to accept, terminate, or more importantly, to seek to impose their own also. The situation is then extremely problematic. Each has expressed a wish to continue the interaction , but clearly conditions for continuance are in need of negotiation, in need of some form of compromise. It is this aspect of defining the situation that has attracted some worthy attention.

McHugh (1968) for instance, talks about the fact of 'social meaning...made possible by the contract of agreement'. The implication is that for social order to be possible, there needs to be some degree of congruence in people's 'perspectives'. He further makes the point that people tend to <u>assume</u> that other interactants are employing a similar perspective anyway; if so, compromise is surely made easier.

Perinbanayagam in summarising what he sees as the dramaturgical position maintains that:-

> "In a very fundamental sense, there is a presumption on the part of both actors that if one shows such an activity or speaks such words, they will lead to such a definition of the situation, and the interaction will be based on these definitions. Hence, each actor in a social situation must take the necessary pains to dramatise his subjective experiences, 'his intentions' as he wants them to be defined or 'taken account of'. As a result, the actors in a situation fuse their 'subjectivities' and arrive at an objective working definition of the situation by dramatistic means."
>
> (p.535)

Goffman, too, emphasises the need for consensual definition. Although he also retains the possibility of the individualist stance by holding that although a collective definition is often a necessary compromise, it need not reflect the true feelings of the participants. They may suppress their immediate feelings whilst overtly accepting policies and goals, even values that are perceived as being acceptable to all involved. The result, a tacit agreement in which open conflict with the attendant risk of meaninglessness or termination of the interaction, is avoided, is termed by him, a 'working consensus'. McHugh says something similar when he claims that despite the assumption of compatible perspectives mentioned above, people may still simultaneously draw private 'relevancies' from the situation.

Weinstein and Deutschberger (1964) criticise Goffman's conception of the working consensus. They maintain that he lays too heavy an emphasis on the determining nature of the initial presentations of self or the encounter. They, wrongly or rightly, declare that by emphasis on the early presentations and rapid crystallisation of a working definition, he ignores much of the dynamic nature of interactions, the changes in definition and identities that may occur as the encounter proceeds through its various phases. They

characterise Goffman thus:

> "Once the identity of each participant is established, as far as Goffman is concerned, the encounter will play itself out fatefully, subject only to minor maneuverings by the participants".
>
> (p.454)

Their own view stresses that interactional encounters are constituted of a continual bargaining process. The goals each bring to the situation and the role-performance he tries to enact are constrained by the role-performance of the other. Continuous adjustment and reorientation is required, as a process for developing a working compromise between the goals of each actor and the "commitments to lines of action he is forced to make in accommodating to the claims of the others" (p.454). They maintain that the 'working consensus' does not become a static determining framework established early in the encounter, but is capable of constant renegotiation throughout without rupturing the relationship.

> "Thus, the encounter may be more fruitfully seen as consisting of an extended sequence of agreements, each controlling the next and with decreasing degrees of freedom than, as Goffman sees it, an interpersonal incident guided by a working consensus, a single definition of the situation 'in charge of the situation'." (p.454) (refer to Goffman (1961)

Their view is that individuals come, and must come, to realise that in their own interests, in order to achieve their goals, they must engage in a bargaining process that involves a degree of compromise, or "to persuade the other they are 'really' in agreement by manipulating the symbolic content of the situation." (p.453)

Goffman, however, does stress the tentative nature of the 'working consensus'; it is merely a working device people are prepared to take-on-board in order to further their aims, but they can readily drop it. He also stresses that people are quite ready to engage in

collective redefinitions of the situation if the expectancies of their preliminary definition are found to be inoperable. But he does seem to imply that, despite this, it is necessary for a determining of consensus rapidly, and fairly conclusively, to be reached before encounters can proceed.

It is worth noting in passing that T.J. Scheff (1973) in his discussion of the assessment of responsibility, also brings out the notion of arriving at some sort of mutually agreed definition. "The fixing of responsibility is a process in which the client offers definitions of the situation", others respond, make their own offer of a definition, and so on; a series of offers and responses is established until "...a definition of the situation acceptable to both is reached" (p.341). He also says that "the assessment of responsibility always includes a process of negotiation"; which brings me to my next point.

It is unlikely that each individual's definition would be entirely operable and matched with what is revealed in the situation. Each must forego, to some extent, the elements of their preliminary definition that are incompatible with the collective view. But the individual may still see the interaction as holding out some possibilities for achieving some aims. The necessity of compromise obviously means that individuals may feel thwarted - a 'working consensus' is likely to be less favourable than had originally been planned - but a consensus is likely to be seen by each as an improvement on the definition proposed solely by others. Each person will still attempt to minimise the extent to which the working consensus disappoints him, vis-a-vis his original aims. In doing so, each is at cross-purposes with the others present, who are attempting to do the same. Thus an element of <u>negotiating</u> will inevitably result.

Working consensus in this sense is a product of the interaction; "It is achieved through negotiation and need not have existed in the minds of any of the participants in advance. Thus it is the interaction process, and not just the creative abilities of individuals, that provides the innovations that may become the basis of social change" (Lauer and Handel P.123). A number of authors urge that some sort of bargaining or negotiating is required to resolve the conflict of interest inherent in multiple definitions of the situation. Few, however, give any detail as to how such negotiations proceed. Scheff (1973) elaborates the notion to some extent, particularly from the point of view of the effect of differential power on the negotiating process. He further discusses dimensions of negotiations, in particular, the degree of consciousness by participants that a bargaining process is in fact going on, and secondly, how the format of the conversation may aid different parties in the negotiation process.

Cardwell discusses negotiations in relation to roles; roles may be problematic and the simple altercasting of role by one, really oversimplifies many encounters "...role reciprocity may not be automatic but may depend on negotiations among the participants." (p.96). The point is made that there is the need for some integration of roles in interaction, for as Turner (1962) (p.23) points out "a role cannot exist without one or more relevant other roles to which it is oriented." A more recent work, by Anselm Strauss (1978) discusses negotiated order in a very detailed fashion, and provides a 'paradigm' for analysing social settings with regard to negotiated order. There seems to be a general agreement that social interactions invariably entail some form of negotiation or bargaining, but little has been done to explicate the processes entailed therein. (see Day and Day 1977 for review of negotiated order theory).

Given, then, the position of competing definitions and the need for some compromise, individuals will seek to choose a line of action commensurate in some degree with his own aspirations, while still keeping others bound in the situation. An exchange model might see things in terms of the search to maximise one's own goals, whilst minimising costs, although I believe there to be some problems inherent in that position. As Weinstein and Deutschberger (1964) (p.453) maintain, "Ego and alter must co-operate if either is to achieve his own imperative, even if these imperatives are not in themselves compatible." What is of research interest is how such a co-operation is achieved, what are the facets of bargaining behaviour that enable consensus or tacit agreement to be obtained, if it ever fully is!

I have already talked about the notion of appearances and how each individual is likely to act in a more or less strategic fashion in the way he presents himself. The appearances one presents to others influences the way others can define the situation, both by making apparent how one intends oneself to be perceived, and in the way it confines the possible ways others may define themselves in that situation. Again, in relation to roles, in defining one's own role by setting the boundaries of its obligations, limits the choices open to others in defining their own roles. In expressing one's own role one is at the same time expressing the roles one expects others to adopt, it is this that Weinstein (1969) refers to as alter-casting. Clearly it can be quite a powerful tool in a bargaining context. It essentially amounts to getting one's definition in first, thereby placing the initial constraint on the other. By seeking to impose one's definition of the situation on others, one is in a sense making the opening bid and placing constraints on the way others may

respond. A number of other miscellaneous strategies of this kind are likely to be involved in the definitional process, hopefully some of them will be revealed in approaching the data.

Scheff's work,for instance, makes the point that differential power pertaining to interacting individuals and parties to interactional bargaining will clearly have an influence on the process and outcome of that bargaining. A particular strategic point relates to how the control of information and the power to do so, and to be able to control the way information is presented, aids in the imposing of a definition of the situation. Schelling (1963) offers the strategy of making apparent the limits to which one is prepared to go in an interaction. The strategy is to make a 'best offer', or at least to make an offer that others are made to perceive as a 'best offer'. Others in the interaction are then forced either to accommodate to that offer or terminate (at least emporarily) the interaction. The timing of such a strategic move is clearly vital, and problematic. Other strategies might entail the appeal to an expert in justification of one's own position. Or the referral to a bogus reference group, invented for the other so that his actions come to be seen as sanctionable by alignment with that reference group. One can speculate on others, but hopefully such strategies are researchable phenomena, and will be revealed in data analysis.

Another Story Begins

This section then has outlined some of the theoretical and empirical work relating to the concept of definition of the situation. Since that literature lacks coherence what is presented here is an attempt to outline some of the variations and to partially marshall

some of the central themes into a more or less coherent interpretation.

It also represents the theoretic beginning of my engagement with the phenomena and research problems encountered in the early stages of my research activity. It is, then, the story that was employed as a "working strategem with respect to the data" (Davis 1974 p.311). This was part of the conceptual armoury that developed quite early on with which I found myself engaging my research issues. As Davis warned, it began to be apparent that the story did not 'fit' that neatly with the emerging data. And as, presumably this always happens, my theorising had not halted smugly at this juncture - my reading and reflections also began to cast doubts on the viability and plausibility of the story I had initially invoked. Not that I found it wholly inappropriate, at certain points there was a relatively comfortable 'fit' with the data, but at other points not. However, I continued to pursue the story recognising that, as Davis also suggested:

> "...the disjunction of imposition begins to generate an internal dialectic in which the story illuminates the data and the data modifies the story."
>
> (p.312)

However, as the process continued, damaging cracks began to appear - the story as presented here was increasingly seen as flawed and inadequate. There were severe problems of trying to access certain phenomena in the way the story suggests. Much of this centred around the issue of 'intentions'. If people display their intentions in their social actions and in their definitions of the situation, how do you recognise them? The whole mentalistic and individualistic conception of definition of the situation became dubious - both in

relation to what I saw happening at the place of research and in terms of my theoretic development and encounters with different stories.

I also began to appreciate certain themes in the story that seemed more significant and relatively more important than the way they were presented in the story. For instance, the issue of power; the differentials in people's abilities or capacities to define situations and have them accepted by others. I began to realise that the story presented some worthy sounding conceptualisations and prescriptions but actually said very little about the definitional process itself. Exactly how do people present definitions? What processes are involved in the negotiations over competing definitions? What factors are important in determining which definitions became accredited and accepted? Is there anything about certain people or groups or institutions; or about structures, that tends to ensure that certain definitions are likely to attain an ascendency over others?

Perhaps more importantly, as indexed by some of the writers presented above (especially McHugh and, to an extent, Perinbanayagam), the central issue in relation to definition of the situation was one of meaning. To define situations is to construct meaning. In this the story was severely flawed; there was no developed, explicit theory of meaning to bolster the pronouncements that so obviously were concerned with the issue of meaning.

Secondly, in the engagement with the data, it became apparent that defining situations was very largely a linguistic practice. Definitions were revealed in language - they are displayed in their use in language. Latterly it became clearer that defining situations are not to be conceived of as cognitive perspectives held by individuals, but as (largely - other non-linguistic signifying practices

are relevant) linguistic agreements or accomplishments; or to put it another way, they are a discursive realisation derived from interaction. But here I am jumping ahead and pre-saying future elaborations. The central point is that methodologically and conceptually definitions of situation had much more to do with language than these preceding writers have suggested. In the account presented here there is again no developed sense of the place of language and language-use in relation to meaning, and thereby, to definitions of the situation.

It is these latter two that are pursued in the subsequent section. Serious questions thrown up by the disjunction between the adopted story and the data, and fresh conceptual realisations, led onto a search for a more adequate theory of meaning and a way of handling definitions as linguistic realisations.

However, the story is not completely despatched, it merely enters into a new dialectic with those emerging conceptions. Again the process is creative, the one transforming the other in the search for a plausible way of providing an adequate formulation of the phenomena under consideration. As already indicated,'definition of the situation' as a phrase has an intrinsic appeal, as well as a long and at times noble pedigree - there seems little point in attempting to eradicate it (an impossible task in my case).

CHAPTER 2

THE SIGN, THE TEXT, THE CRITIC

INTRODUCTION

The discussion of the background to the theoretical notions of definitions of the situation leaves unresolved a number of philosophical and methodological problems. It is to these that I now wish to pay some attention. The starting point for this excursion is the reported statement by McHugh (1968) that, "The definition of the situation is the sociological notion analogous to the more general one of 'meaning'", and that the theoretical conceptions already presented are flawed in this regard. That is, they have failed to provide an adequate and encompassing theory of meaning with which to underwrite their more pragmatic statements. And 'flawed' particularly because they fail to tackle at sufficient depth the contribution of language and language-use to the definitional process.

There has been a major injunction from a variety of sources throughout the recent history of sociology and social psychology, to investigate phenomena at the level of meanings, this is shared by the theorists of definition of the situation. However, taking that injunction seriously has led to a proliferation of philosophical and methodological dilemmas. Quite simply, the question of accounting for the meaning of any social phenomenon has proved highly problematic. Indeed from the point of view of definition of the situation, the problems remain largely unresolved, or at best equivocal.

At root the problem is one of providing the grounds for an adequate formulation of the event under consideration. From a given piece of (verbal) behaviour, how do we extract an adequate 'reading' of what was said? How are we able to demonstrate that the account of

the event that we provide is a sensible, plausible, 'correct', appropriate etc. account?

In the first instance I will seek to reintroduce the mystery that militates against the commonsense assumption that the rendering of plausible accounts of social behaviour is non-problematic. It is true that in our everyday, mundane affairs we have the apparent ability and the compulsion to so provide accounts. This ability is both pervasive and taken-for-granted. However the problematic nature of such procedures is made obvious by a brief consideration of a wide variety of 'natural' settings: one need only reflect on the proceedings of judicial evidence, or public inquiries, or even simple bar-room chat in the aftermath of a football match.

There has been a tradition, across disciplines, to assume the feasibility of providing incorrigible formulations of social behaviour, and more pertinently, speech behaviour. The overt aim tends to vary along a continuum; from the assertive and assumptive posture of the claim to provide a 'correct' account, to the less strong appeal to discover an 'adequate' formulation. As Wootton (1975) has demonstrated, serial disciplines' attempts to attain such goals in the analysis of discourse, have resulted, when pursued, in crippling methodological and philosophical pitfalls. It is some of these that I hope to display as we proceed.

But to return to the central problem: how do we know that the interpretation and transformation that we give to some piece of verbal behaviour is not in some way doing violence to that which was expressed originally in the behaviour? As interpreters (if that is what we must be - a point to be disputed perhaps), we inevitably engage in classificatory procedures; what warrant do we have for assuming that those procedures accurately reflect the sense of the behaviour? Or must we acknowledge that we are merely imposing our own

overt or covert systems of classification? Wootton rapidly narrows the issue down. He sees the root of the problem encapsulated in the controversy focussed on the question of "whether it is more accurate and useful to determine the meaning of what we say independently of the particular context in which it is said." (p.14). This is a core question and the controversy that rages around it centres on differing views on the philosophy of language, and its resolution has marked implications for the way in which differing academic groupings seek to explicate verbal behaviour.

In the broadest terms the controversy revolves around the general principle of the contextual determination of social events, and upon where the ultimate warrant for the designation of meaning resides. As Douglas (1971) has it, the "....basic idea of this principle is that concrete human events are always to some degree dependent on the situational context in which they occur and can be adequately explained only by taking into consideration that situational context". Thus, more specifically, the meaning of any social event is irretrievably bound to the contextual features that inhabit that event. The principle of the "contextual determination of meaning ... (states that) the context within which a given statement or action occurs is of fundamental importance in determining the meanings imputed to it by members of society" (Douglas p.37): and by researchers, one might add.

But what does a consideration of the context imply? Who can deny the mind boggling complexity of the contextual totality of any single social event. Especially if one includes historical and futurological aspects; the complexity is added to immeasurably by a massive imbeddedness of contextual features. There is a strong temptation to posit a sense of inevitable situational uniqueness.

Theoretically at least it is hard to imagine two absolutely identical social situations unless one hypothesises a parallel universe. But herein lurks the first paradox: if we accept it, in theoretical terms, that social situations will be, by virtue of their myriad configurations of contextual features, ineluctably unique, we must also recognise that for practical purposes, social events do have the appearance, for involved members, of a certain transituational uniformity. There is a phenomenological experience of 'sameness' or at least a manageable similarity between situations. For our everyday practical purposes we seem able to ignore distinctive features and mould similar or recognisable features into a recurrent configuration. This must be so, else our habitual confrontation with unique events would play havoc with our undoubted ability to organise our activities. All this is perhaps rather obvious but it has serious implications for any behavioural scientific practice. As Goodenough (1966 p.39) points out:

> "The great problem for a science of man is how to get from the objective world of materiality, with its infinite variability, to the subjective world of form as it exists in what, for lack of a better term, we must call the minds of our fellow men. We all of us succeed in doing so somehow or we wouldn't learn to understand each other. That language exists at all is evidence enough of this. But the processes by which we do have eluded our grasp."
>
> (emphasis added)

Goodenough may beg certain questions here (with the distinction between 'objective materiality' and the 'subjective world'; or with the assumption of 'form') but he makes the point. However, for the moment those 'processes' must continue to elude us. For although that is, in some respects, the central concern of much of this thesis, I do not intend to take up the gauntlet at this point. It is worth mentioning in passing, however, that progress towards a solution

to the dilemma hinges on the realisation that we have the capacity to symbolically represent situations to ourselves, and not least via language. Representations that are selectively constructed, from innumerable possible alternatives, in the light of our past experiences, future expectations and current practical concerns. This goes some way to solving the paradox for the layman but for the researcher, questions relating to the processes of this selection and the nature of they symbolic construction remain.

It is not only the case that there is an 'infinite variability' of materiality; we must also assume that the range of meanings potentially available in any 'stretch of talk' is also, if not infinite, extremely broad, in principle. How feasible, then, is it to provide "adequate unequivocal formulations of what is going on in any stretch of talk?" (Wootton p.19). If there is, in principle, a wide range of possible meanings then there is correspondingly a wide range of possible interpretations. How, as researcher, does one extract an adequate interpretation, and what is the warrant for doing so? The sense of adequate is itself extremely problematic - although not as problematic as proposing the feasibility of a 'correct' interpretation. Wootton suggests that 'adequate' here refers to an ability to "extract unambiguously one formulation rather than a set of alternative formulations". I find this a rather circular response. One might suggest that the sense of adequacy for the researcher does not differ markedly from that of the layman. That is to say that the notion of adequacy is tied to the real, practical concerns, and purposes of, the researcher; to the level of analysis he is attempting to undertake; and to the mode of discourse in which he is expected to speak to his audience. I shall need to return to this.

The decidability of meaning, and the place of contextual features in formulating and portraying meaning is of prime concern then. It has been a general assumption that the ability to extract an unambiguous formulation from a set of alternatives is dependent upon an ability to develop "general criteria for deciding the meaning of words and general criteria for deciding what sort of utterance an utterance is." (Wootton)

Broadly speaking, traditional solutions to those problems have taken two basic forms. Firstly, there are those who have simply sought to decontextualise meanings. Secondly, there are those who have, by assorted means, attempted to control or order the contextual complexity. We even find an extraordinary solution from the linguist Bloomfield, who seems to attempt a divorce between the study of language and the study of meaning:

> "The statement of meanings is therefore the weak point in language study and will remain so until human knowledge advances very far beyond its present state. In practice, we define the meaning of linguistic form, wherever we can, in terms of some other science."
>
> (Bloomfield. 1933. p.140)

This is most faint-hearted. I shall look to some more contemporary and radical conceptions of meaning and language for a way out of the dilemma.

I initially found most comfort in the conception of meaning embodied in those assorted texts that might be included under such rubrics as semiotics, semiology or post-structuralist. This discourse provided for me an over-arching conception of meaning that I found comfortable, together with some important minor concepts and some important and enlightening methodological insights. However, partly as a result of its dominant concentration on literary texts, or more broadly on written texts generally, rather than upon spoken discourse,

the total answer to my quest was not readily located. In particular their focus helped little, initially, with the question of the contextual determination of meaning, when 'context' referred to the social context. It was also difficult to see through the dense literary and philosophical text analysis to a means of relating the spoken utterance and its patternings to higher categories of social structure and the social system. The relationship between the semantic system and the social system is one of the most thorny dilemmas facing the social sciences if they are to take the study of social meanings seriously, as I believe they must. It is, of course, part of that bridge building between the so-called macro- and micro- levels of analysis.

I am concerned here then to display some meanderings towards a conception of meaning in general that would prove adequate for the analysis of everyday discourse. I am further concerned to pay attention to, and incorporate into that the question of the position of 'context' and its part in the determination of social meaning. I also need to give some space to the relationship between linguistic meaning and the general features of social structure and ultimately culture. Lastly, I will consider some of the implications of these excursions for a research practice.

MEANING IN MOTION / THE PRACTICE OF CLOSURE : A TENSION

The Sign Reborn - Saussure

Most often at the root of campaigns undertaken to discover the meaning(s) of social events, and specifically social interaction events involving language-use, has been an urgent delving for a Source.

The Holy Grail of such adventurers is in the form of a Source of some nature that can fulfil the role of the means of the generation and the existence of meaning. What needs to surface is something to which the adventurer can refer which guarantees to his public that the meaning that he presents to them has an authenticity and authority beyond reproach and that declaims its own limit. The version on offer is sanctified by the presence of the Source and the audience is asked to pay homage then to the finality and the primacy of that version.

The Source is said to provide the answers to the question of 'how do we know that we have provided an adequate and unequivocal formulation of what is going on in any stretch of talk?'. It is said to underwrite and guarantee the version on offer. The Source, however, has proved most elusive (as all categories of the occult properly should), and when manifestations are said to have occurred, its manifold guises throw doubt on the whole exercise. Amongst other guises there have been manifestations in the forms of: the transcendental ego; human consciousness; intentionality; intersubjective experience; pure form; and God. It is not my intention here to iterate the range of 'theological' discourses that are responsible for excogitating these various Sources, although some may be encountered as we proceed. Rather, subsequent pages will deal with some heretical notions that go some way towards suggesting that any such search for the Source is misplaced at the outset. Some prophets of this Anti-Christ even go so far as to suggest that such a quest has dominated Western Philosophy and is responsible for its recurrent traumas and delusions - but I shall try and avoid becoming embroiled too much in that descent into hell-fire.

It might be said that part of the bravery behind such heresy derives for some from a claimed disciplinary right to focus almost

exclusively on the 'written' text. As such there is an escape from the naturally occurring phenomenon of the search and acceptance of Source amongst people in their everyday interactions. It is noticeable that sociologists in their attempts to solve the question of the meaning and warrantability of formulations encounter more readily serious difficulties and seem less able and/or willing to forego the search for Source. For instance, if one pursues the ethnomethodological programme to the limits of its positive pronouncements, one encounters the issue frontally. Indeed it might be said that the ethnomethodological 'movement' splinters at just the moment when the issue enters their project. They all begin on more or less the same ground and seem to be moving together towards a rejection of an idealised guarantee of meaning. However, I believe that on some versions that it is found impossible to do, and the search for the Source is taken up once again. Others more happily pursue the heretical line to the end. The equivocation and self-acknowledged paradoxes that feature in the ethnomethodological texts bears witness to the latent heresy of their approach. Whilst some (such as Blum et al (1974), for example) are prepared to excommunicate themselves, the majority seem to balk at the prospect, and return to the Source. Some might want to suggest that such a retreat undermines, ultimately, the radical potential of their enterprise. The same movement can be found in other areas of sociology and social psychology. People edge towards a rejection of the source, a denial of structure, of centre, towards the abyss of a burgeoning relativism, but having taken it to the limits turn back and recast the world in familiar ways. I might cite Goffman in his 'Frame Analysis' (1974) as another site of this dangerous escapade, and as an example of the retreat to formal and abstract structure as the Source.

True to its own dictates, the origins of this heretical movement are not readily locatable, not necessary to make clear, or only exist in the interplay of various texts and historical moments. One might discover pertinent debate in the work of the Stoics and the demise of the heresy at that point under the derision of the Idealists led by Socrates. One would certainly find some eminently heretical texts in the works of Nietzsche. More contemporaneously, I might have gone to the texts of Pierce and his logico-philosophical consideration of the notion of sign. But as a European, a more convenient and widely acknowledged entry is provided by the works of Ferdinand de Saussure whose texts crystallised some points at which the search for a Source suffers a crippling apostasis.

A brief examination of some of his thinking not only provides an entry into those more recent radical conceptions that provide the beginnings of an approach to meaning and discourse analysis that with modification I have found useful, but also will provide a useful glossary of terms that will continue to re-occur throughout what is to follow.

The crux of Saussure's thinking in relation to the central concern here, is the principle that signification, far from embodying the 'natural' relationship that it seems is most readily accepted on both a commonsense and on some philosophical conceptions, is in fact an arbitrary system of differences. It is in these relations of difference that the elements of the system obtain their meaning. Saussure sets his mark with the following classic quote from his 'Course in General Linguistics'(1972):

> "In language there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system,but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system." (p.120)

This is the founding moment of modern Structuralism, and the inauguration of a theory of meaning that has burgeoned and flourished and mutated under the rubric, not only of Structuralism, but all other post-structuralist and semiotic movements. It is also foundational of most, non-Marxist, materialist theories of language. One can already begin to see the possibilities for by-passing the frustrating struggle to discover a Source to warrant meaning.

As already stated, I do not intend here to provide a cogent summary of the myriad ideas contained in the Course in General Linguistics. Not least because those ideas have been transformed to a large degree by more recent developments. However, some of his key concepts have become common coinage and it is important at this stage that some understanding of those be achieved if only for the sake of subsequent familiarity.

The 'elements' of the 'system' referred to above are, of course, 'signs'. Signs are the core and basic concept in the theory of meaning embodied in structuralist and post-structuralist and semiotic studies. It has a lengthy and distinguished pedigree.

The struggle between the heretics, as I have castigated them here, and the searchers after absolute Truth was present at the infancy of Western philosophy. The subsequent hegemony of the latter logocentric perspective stems from Socrates' artful dismissal of the Stoics and Sophists. Whilst Plato stumbled blindly round his darkened cave searching for the safety of originary Ideal Forms, and Aristotle proposed the availability of 'immediate truths' made present intuitively by the nous, the Stoics were giving their time to considering the first theory of signs. That hoary old chestnut of philosophy, the relation between language and reality, exercised minds rigorously then as now. It was the Stoics who interposed the

notion of signification as a completely necessary intermediary in the relationship. They thus avoided a reference to some transcendent Other Thing said to represent reality or capable of apprehending reality at some point beyond or outside of the relationship between the material world and the materiality of language signs.

The interpolation of the sign in the dyad 'word - thing' (or sound - object; or language - reality) acts to create an occupation of that space that is sought by the Source, in whatever guise. It denies the supposed naturalness and necessity of the relationship between the word and the object. It moves against that philosophical tradition that goes back more recently at least as far as St. Augustine, that asserts that the words of a language simply name objects; that every word has a meaning; that this meaning is directly co-ordinated with the word; that it is the object for which the word stands. This is the scholastic Realist view of language which holds that the things to which we apply the same name have common essential properties. Terms refer, in a directly related way, to an essential and immutable substance that inheres in the thing. This tradition has continued up to the present time (versions being found in the work of J.S. Mill through to Bertrand Russell and beyond). The view implies that the location of the supposed referent of a word entails that the full and complete meaning of that word has been discovered.

Such 'naming' or 'Referential' theories of meaning have been severely criticised through much of the latter period of this century by a series of linguistic philosophers culminating in the work of G. Ryle and Wittgenstein. The movement has been towards an approach via natural language and language-use - with a secondary movement to consider language and meaning in terms of the relationship of element to element. (Of course these two are not necessarily mutually exclusive.)

In relation to the first trend I would refer the reader to Waismann (1965 esp; pp.158-162) where he considers three traditional conceptions of the nature of meaning and concludes that "It is clear that none of these reaches the heart of the matter :

> "(i) The meaning of a word is the object to which it refers.
>
> (ii) The meaning of a word is the image which we have when we speak, or hear the word.
>
> (iii) The meaning of a word is the effects it has on the hearer."

There may be occasions, certain types of words and particular investigative purposes where such definitions may have a limited application, but they are insufficient for an adequate theory of meaning, especially in relation to the requirements of the social scientist. It also seems hard to deny that there appears to be a virtual psychological compulsion to seek for 'substantival' definitions of meaning, Waismann's own solution is to suggest, following Wittgenstein, that if we really need a substantival explanation of meaning, we had best say that, "The meaning of a word is its use."

At this level of analysis then, the nub of the various critiques of the versions of essentialist or realist theories of meaning, is not that words qua words do not have meaning, but that to seek to discover that meaning in something 'outside' or external to the word and its context of use, existing as either a mentalistic or materialist essential entity, is ultimately fruitless. A most forceful critique can be found in Wittgenstein's example of the word 'game'. It demonstrates that the very diversity and number of games, and the uses of the word 'game', militates against the possibility of discovering any fundamental common property: any essence that captures the meaning (Wittgenstein 1967). For many, including (or most notably) Wittgenstein,

the only way forward is to conceive of meaning in terms of the context of the use of the word - or at least some other contextual feature. This is, of course, a point of departure for the ethnomethodologists.

There is a tradition of referring to linguistic features beyond the context of their use in terms of some potential for meaning or with some conception of the immanence of meaning. Again the level of analytic focus is most relevant. Linguists have long pointed out that any linguistic system has a dependence upon a competence at both a phonological and at a lexicogrammatical level. There is a clear sense of the possibility of meaninglessness if a use of language does violence to either the phonological or the lexicogrammatical obligations of the language. If we consider the question; "How do I understand this sentence?"; it is a huge gloss to make reference to one's knowledge of words qua words. It glosses in the first place an understanding of an extensive, if finite, phonological and morphological system at one level, and a known lexicon and syntactic/grammatical system at another. These levels are certainly necessary for the grasping of the meaning of the sentence but they are rarely sufficient in terms of the comprehension of natural spoken language. The constituents of the phonological system, for instance, cannot sensibly be said to have meaning of themselves, they are not, in this sense, signs. They are purely relational elements whose meaning (such as it is) depends on their relationship to other elements in the system, both present and absent in the particular instance. It might still make sense to refer to meaning in this case, since one can conceive of the elements being composed in recognisably 'meaningless' ways. One might allow, with Edie (1976) that meaning in this sense is <u>immanent</u>; totally embedded in the basic structures of a particular language and dependent upon actualisation on particular occasions of relational use.

Merleau-Ponty is one who would want to suggest that the notion of immanence of meaning is applicable to higher levels and to all words per se. Thus the meaning of elements at the semantic level is purely relational also:

> "Each word has meaning only in so far as it is sustained in this meaning-function by all the others...For a word to keep its sense it has to be held in place by all the others." (1965)

He prefigures here, to a degree, the more fully structuralist conception of meaning that came to have such radical implications.

Language is not, then, a way of naming things said to exist independently of language. The meaning of such objects is not somehow transparently obvious, there, available to some pure transcendent consciousness. Saussurean linguistics clearly rejects any simple representational theories of meaning. As the views of Saussure have more recently been taken up and developed, its full implications are said to entail a rejection too of all idealist conceptions of meaning and subjectivity, including those intentional theories of meaning employed by the phenomenologists and philosophers of language such as Grice (1957) and Searle (1969). A semiotic theory of meaning calls a halt to all regressive searches for some ultimate and universal ground for meaning; the guarantor of meaning is not to be found at some transcendent and logocentric point beyond the language. However I need to make clearer the notion of Sign lest its own mystical connotations take hold.

> "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image."
>
> (Saussure 1972. p.66)

A clear enough statement of the rejection of mere referential or naming theories. A further part of his objections concerns the

questioning of the assumption that ready-made ideas can exist prior to words. As he says, "psychologically our thought - apart from its expression in words - is only a shapeless and indistinct mass." There has been a more general movement towards this conflation of thought and language. It receives a most convincing treatment in the work of B. Whorf (1956) and Sapir, E. (1966) (encased in the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis).

As with all relational concepts, the sense of 'sign' is not readily articulated. What a sign 'unites', as we have been told, is a sound-image and a concept. Saussure employs the terms signifier and signified respectively as the two portions of the sign. A sign consists of a relationship between these two. Every word must partake of this relationship for it to have any meaning. The crucial point here is that it is the sign that constitutes meaning; that is, meaning resides in the relationship between signifier and signified. Neither element of the sign pre-exists the other, nor has any meaning outside of that relationship.

There is a second essential feature of this relationship; its arbitrariness.

> "  is a written sign composed of the sound-image 'ZO' and the signified; the concept of elephant. It also corresponds to the sound-image 'SHO' with its signified; 'image'. In English we have the sound-image 'elefant' with the concept of elephant."

The point of this is to display the arbitrary nature of the relationship between signifier and signified. There is no 'natural' link between a particular phonetic arrangement and a concept or vice versa. The relationship is arbitrary in that there is no necessary or natural connection between the two elements of the sign. They are arbitrary also in the sense that the relationship is only a social convention.

Language is clearly social, and the sign must be a party to that sociality, and must conform to the linguistic conventions of the particular language community in which the sign circulates. The arbitrary nature of the relationship does not imply a collapse into anarchy. Individuals are clearly not at liberty to assign, willy-nilly, a concept to any old sound-image. They must clearly pay due heed to the linguistic conventions ascribed to by their language peers. The point is almost one of phenomenological reduction: to be clear about the processes of signification, we need to purge the incipient, commonsense urge to assume the naturalness, the immutability and inevitability of any signifier-signified relationship.

However, in the social construction of meaning in its broadest sense, it becomes necessary for that relationship to attain a fixity; the sociality of language demands the generation of a meaningful sign by the appearance of a relation of <u>equivalence</u> between signifier and signified. The notion of equivalence is important here. As Barthes points out in his essay, 'Myth Today' (1957:1973) on the relation between signifier and signified:

> "This relation concerns objects which belong to different categories, and this is why it is not one of equality but one of equivalence...For what we grasp is not at all one term after the other, but the correlation which unites them..."
>
> (pp. 112-113)

There is no sense in which we can see a movement in signification, in which one element leads to the other; the two constitute - like two sides of the same coin - a meaningful whole: the sign.

Barthes provides a useful and helpful illustration. If he takes a bunch of roses he is able to present them to a friend as an expression of his passion. The roses then act to <u>signify</u> his passion. Experientially, the division into, a bunch of roses as signifier and

passion as the signified is an irrelevency. But under semiological analysis the experience is 'decomposed' into roses and passion, both pre-existing their fusion under the third term: the sign. It is crucial, analytically, not to confuse the bunch of roses as signifier and the bunch of roses as sign, for : "the signifier is empty, the sign is full, it is a meaning" (p.113). We shall encounter this relationship later and see how its undoubted central relevance has been challenged and modified.

Saussure insists on the full study of this relational nature of language. He sought to bring a measure of systematicity to the super-abundance of everyday linguistic expression. Focus, then, is not only on individual elements but on their inter-relationships in a total system. Language requires study synchronically as well as diachronically. That is, language must be studied in its total possible realisations at a point in time, as a network of structural relations, as well as in its historicity - in its development through time. One might talk here of a static versus a dynamic study of language. The distinction is important, not least because of its subsequent decomposition by the post-structuralists. Saussures' insistence on the synchronic was probably a cautionary measure; a stem against current trends and an attempt to provide a feasible means of bringing some system to the study that would allow for a more rigorous scientism.

The diachronic analysis reflects the development and interplay of linguistic formulations over time. It would be revealing of the empirical richness, the contextedness of everyday discourse. Such ebb and flow often thwarts analytic ordering. The implication of synchrony is that it bears a different position (and here it is difficult to avoid spatial metaphors; an inherent difficulty with all talk of structure), in relation to this constant process through

time. The sense is that beneath (or behind) (?) the process is a structure that generates and supports it. It is this structure that synchronic analysis seeks to reveal.

It is at this point that Saussure is required to produce another important distinction. He presents a division in the nature of language to which his two modes of analysis can correspond. Thus he proposes the notions of language and parole. He defines la langue thus:

> "A social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty."
>
> (1972. p.61)

La langue is, if you like, the social system of language. It is then contrasted with parole, commonly referred to as individual acts of speech. Parole then corresponds to the particular realisation derived from that system named la langue. La langue is an abstract and immanent structure of language; parole its concrete realisation in particular instances of language use.

There is a further implied distinction here (that some have taken Saussure to task for) between the individual's personal freedom to choose and engage in particular speech acts, and the constraints of language as a social institution, a social fact (in a very nearly Durkheimian sense). La langue is:

> "The social side of speech, outside the individual who can never create nor modify it by himself,it exists only by virtue of a sort of contract signed by the members of a community." (p.66)

and;

> "...language is not complete in any speaker, it exists perfectly only within a collectivity."
>
> (p.65)

A particular speech act, selected by the speaker, is an active and concrete realisation of one of the possibilities of the system: but the system provides those possibilities and enables the choice. Similarities between this distinction and that embodied in the relationship between the notions of 'message' and 'code' have been noted. One may also point to the degree of affinity between the Chomskian distinction of 'competence-performance' and langue-parole. What langue is made to provide is the possibility of providing material in stasis for linguistic study. The inevitable indexicality, individualism and mutability of everyday speech acts, is given a fixity by the proposition of the structure of la langue. It provides, in other words, what Saussure envisaged as the possibility of a rigorous scientific analysis of language.

The degree of abstraction implied by the concept of la langue is somewhat equivocal. There is a sense in which la langue exists as the totality, the potential summation of individual speech acts. Indeed, Saussure recognises that the raw material for any linguistic analysis must be speech acts themselves. However, dialectically, each individual speech act is only analytically comprehensible when it is related to the whole system from which it emerges and which gives it its warrant. The system is constituted of its total possible realisations of individual acts, but la langue can never actually appear, it can never have concrete existence. It can only come into being under the construction of an analyst to the extent that he is able to capture in the system the potential infinity of individual utterances. The nature and enormity of that task makes the concept, for many, illusory.

La langue is not taken to be a universal structure either; it is specific to particular communities whose shared conventions help constitute the system in the first place. Neither is it totally

stable; it does alter over time. It is then, at this point that the diachronic-synchronic distinction re-emerges. Synchrony seeks to bolster the scientific enterprise by holding the phenomena in place and time.

The over-emphasis of langue over parole; of synchrony over diachrony; of structure over process and, ultimately, of language over speech, whilst not necessarily a part of Saussure's overt prescriptions, became an increasingly apparent dichotomising amongst subsequent and various supporters. Such weighted approaches have increasingly come under attack as post-Saussureans seek to reintroduce; process, diachronics and speech.

The relations of primacy shown above perhaps reflect the broader, philosophically perennial one of form and matter. Saussure's interest, as linguist, is primarily in the form of words and language as opposed to their appearance in actuality as individual items. It is the notion of form that was to become central to that school of linguists who extended the Saussurean tradition: the Formalists. This movement developed as a school of literary criticism in the Russia of the 1920's - 1930's. Perhaps the best known proponent is Roman Jakobson; but others included Boris Eichenbaum, Victor Shklovsky and Boris Tomasjevsky. It was movements like this in the fields of literary criticism and literary history, that developed structuralist notions most fully and with variation. However, I cannot digress into an historical account of those movements. The point I want to make is that the implicit emphasis on form in Saussure, and its more overt emphasis amongst these other movements, tended to lead to a belief that the meaning of a word or utterance is discoverable only by reference to its formal abstract properties, to its realisation within the logical structures of the phonological and lexicogrammatical systems. There is a movement away again from context, and process, to the certainties of controlled

metalanguages of abstract structure.

The notion of form brings us back to the starting point of this brief excursion into Saussurean linguistics. Since what gives a word its distinctive form is its systematic differentiation (conceptual and phonetical) from other words. Thus the word 'cone' is differentiated phonetically from 'hone' and 'zone' for instance. It is also differentiated semantically and conceptually from 'cube' and 'pyramid' for example. However, as we have already seen from Saussure's distinction between signifier and signified, it is misleading to sharply divorce conceptual and phonetic points of differentiation. The notion of sign designates a relation of equivalence and not one of either priority or equality. Saussure makes the point with an illuminating metaphor:

> "Language can also be compared with a sheet of paper: thought is the front and sound is the back; one cannot cut the front without cutting the back at the same time."
>
> (1972)

Analytically, however, a word marks itself off by those plays of difference. But these differences must further relate to a systematic structure of other differentiations.

It is the participation of language in the social realm that actually establishes what differences mark specific sounds as significantly different. Since in actual spoken language, with its range of dialects, pronunciations and other modes of articulation, not all differences of pure sound actually are recognised as importantly different for the form of words and the construction of meaning. The level of difference at which differences are 'recognised' is referred to as the phonemic level. It is these phonemes that the structure of language sanctions as important; that speakers of that language hear as signifi-

cant differences that mark out specific spaces in which meaning-contrasts can occur. Diachronically, then, actually occurring shades of 'difference' and 'sameness' in spoken language are an 'unnoticed' fact; only those 'differences' and 'samenesses' are perceived which the languages' synchronic structure makes meaningful. The latent flux and ideosyncracy of spoken language in the diachronic plane, is recuperated into identifiable stability by the proposition of a formal identity of words derived from a recognised system of differentiation.

A final Saussurean distinction will suffice for this introductory 'glossary'. This distinction concerns the modes of differentiation applicable to words. It is most readily articulated in conjunction with another Saussurean term not yet encountered: that of valeur. The notion of value arises in any study in which the aim (or necessity) is to relate in a system, things from different categories. Thus with linguistics:

> "Here as in political economy we are confronted with the notion of value: both sciences are concerned with a system for equating things of different orders - labour and wages in one, and a signified and a signifier in the other."
>
> (1974. p.79)

A word obtains its linguistic value from its position in the system of differential relations. Relations of difference are of two essential modes. Valeur, is seen then, to be composed of:

> '"(i) dissimilar things that can be exchanged for the thing of which the value is to be determined.
>
> (ii) similar things that can be compared with the thing of which the value is to be determined."'
>
> (cited in Harre 1979. p.66)

These relationships are most usually referred to as 'paradigmatic' and 'syntagmatic'. Syntagmatic relations refer to a words combinatorial possibilities. It relates the ways in which words can combine with other words in a sentence in ways that are conventionally intelligible (the same relation holds for signs generally, and for parts of words). Thus, there might be said to be a syntagmatic relationship between 'grass' and 'grows' that allows the possibility of the combinatorial form '(the) grass grows'. Signs thus have a 'horizontal' relation that marks their place, and whose differential implications contributes to the meaning. Another linear relation such as '(the) grass screams', whilst perhaps verging on the meaningless, presents at least a distinctive syntagmatic relationship that has import for any meaning attributable to the sequence. Syntagm require a linear reading in which the combinatorial nature of the signs defers meaning until the sequence is complete; each item relating to the next and the overall system of relationships contributing vitally to the sense of the sequence. This sense of deferment is important since in a way it is permanent. There is a point in suggesting that the system of relationships never reaches total fulfilment and meaning is endlessly deferred; at least in part. It is in this way that it is possible to refer to meaning as in a constant state of process; of being emergent; becoming and not being.

The paradigmatic relations of words are those which it has with other words (signs could replace words here too) outside of its relations within the syntagm. In essence it is a relationship of contrast with those other words in the language system, that, whilst not actually present in the current syntagm, exhibit the potential of so being. It has been referred to as a 'vertical' relation, in which the word 'chosen', as it were, has associations of various kinds with other available words not so chosen on this occasion. Thus in the syntagm

'(the) grass grows', the word 'grows' has a paradigmatic relation to contrastive, absent words such as 'withers', '(is) green' etc. The meaning of the particular sequence of words is made powerful by the fact that what is there, present in the syntagm, has a systematic relation to other items not present. What is excluded by the option contributes to the meaning of what <u>is</u> included. The total system of a word's paradigmatic relations analytically determines its nuances of meaning. For instance, if there were no word 'withers' in paradigmatic relation to 'grows' then something subtle is lost from the meaning of 'grows' (and from '(is) green'). Some have wanted to see the structure as constructed purely on a system of binary opposites, in which case a paradigmatic, one:one relationship would prove vital to the meaning of any item. We can see instances of this type of binary relationship in forms such as 'right - wrong', 'reality - illusion', 'night - day', and so on, where clearly the absence of either side of the relationship has severe implications for the meaning of the other. I feel it is a mistake, however, to conclude that the meaning of all words depends upon such an oppositional binary relationship: the relations are generally more multiform and complex than that.

It is in the dichotomies that Saussure presents that lurk the fissures that subsequent theorists have widened and exploited. For some his approach lays the foundations for a more clearly materialist theory of language and meaning. For others there is a move away from considering the system or structure as existing in a static immutable form (although for analytic purposes, synchronic analysis may continue to do just that); it is a system of relations, a constant interplay and interpenetration of differences. Saussure's sense of structure is not that static, determining thing implicit in, say, sociological functionalist theories. It offers an alternative ground for meaning

that elides the Source and the Centre. There is no requirement to seek for meaning in the thing referred to, in external objects existing in reality 'out there'. Nor is there a need to refer to some originary point, such as a human intential consciousness, or some other transcendent point. Instead Saussure offers the possibility of an economy of signs, in which the signifier also attains its materiality and is not caste forever as mere representation of some other material object. As Silverman and Torode put it most vigorously:

> "Confronted by the terrorism which would restore language to Nature, we begin to grasp the possibilities of an anti-terrorist intervention...concerned with the play of differences which constitute the work of signs."
>
> (1980. p.255-6)

They place Saussure's thesis as a crucial potential critique of the practice of 'interpretation', which they parade as the method par excellance, and the legitimating force, of idealism (of which, incidentally, they see Garfinkel's documentary method as the most recent form of tyranny). In its stead there is the offer of a means to the understanding of linguistic practice, "as the setting into play of a 'network of forever negative differences' (that) has been the aim of Saussure's materialist successors". (1980 p.256)

It must be said however that most significant attention has, until quite recently, been played to other aspects of Saussure's programme. The compulsion seems to have been to concentrate on synchronic analysis only. To emphasise the sense of form; of static structure; the syntagmatic; and langue, with a correspondingly disappointing neglect of process; the diachronic; the paradigmatic, and parole.

Against Structure

The original Saussurean insight, that our sense of reality is engendered by our linguistic capacity to classify and organise the chaotic flux of experience; and that language provides for the construction of fundamental patternings of difference and sameness that alone are responsible for that order and the making sense of reality, is to be retained. However, the detail of the Saussurean enterprise, as developed by others has led into some traditional cul-de-sacs. There have, however, been other movements that have developed from a Saussurean base more fruitfully; not least those groups of texts that fall under the loose labels of semiology and post-structuralism. It is some thoughts on those perspectives, and ultimately their scope for a social critical practice that I want to explore here and in what is to follow.

Structuralism can be said to have arisen out of that side of post-Saussurean linguistics that provides a privileged position to one side of Saussure's dichotomous relationships in the manner already indicated. In this way structuralist discourse had tended towards closure. It held open the hope of a formalised system that could provide the means of locating the irreducible, mandatory meaning of an utterance (text, word or sign). Structuralist criticism had begun to function as a new metalanguage - a kind of universal 'grammar' of narrative that would subsume and explain all other modes of discourse. This was a drift that Barthes had encountered in his earlier work (in his 'Elements of Semiology' (1967) and to a lesser degree in his 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives' (1966:1977)), although, even then, he seemed to sense a certain unease:

> "Nothing in principle prevents a meta-language from in its turn becoming the language-object of a new meta-language: this would for instance, be the case with semiology if it were to be spoken by another science (sic)"
>
> (Elements 1967. p.93)

More conservative critical approaches came to speak of the 'structure of the text', a foundational and formalised patterning that constrained a text, and provided systems and rules for the generation and comprehension of meaning. Embedded in that orientation lurks a return to the figurative language of Source and origin; in literary analysis in particular, it lurches back towards the reinstatement of the author-as-source and guarantor of meaning, that the movement had initially begun to step away from.

Part of this drive is the one that had exercised Saussure; the hope of a fully scientific and stable semiology. Linguistics as science. Barthes came to castigate his own, and others, early semiological practices for resting on "a euphoric dream of scientificity" (Tel Quel N.47. p.97. 1971 - quoted in Coward and Ellis 1977). With such work as "S/Z" (1974) and "From Work to Text" (1979), Barthes begins to reinvestigate the condition of the sign. His fundamental rethinking of the relationships upon which the notion of the sign depend has profound implications for the development of those theories of meaning and language that are semiological. We shall have cause to encounter those and other aspects of Barthes' work as we proceed.

There is a general movement away, then, from the search for the primal, underlying structure of discourse towards the processes of a discourse's own structuration. That movement is similar to Giddens' disquiet over the concept of 'structure' that he sees embodied in sociological forms of structuralism and functionalism. He finds fault with their homeostasis, and the denial of process and activity

(for him the active production of individuals); and for their neglect of the processes of 'production' (of structures) (Giddens 1976). He, too, interpolates the concept of 'structuration' to 'determine the conditions which govern the continuity and dissolution of structures or types of structure', and which refers to 'the dynamic process whereby structures come into being' (p.120-1). It is at this point too that tension appears in the ethnomethodological programme, a tension created by an urge to introduce transituational and decontextualised, 'deep' 'practices' on the one hand, and the continued espoused attempt to focus only on the processes or 'methods' of actual language use. However, the tension only arises because they are at least prepared to openly confront the issue of 'methods' as opposed to abstract and imported structures.

Their concern to discern the methods by which a sense of reality is accomplished, finds an echo in Barthes concern to analyse how a text means rather than simply, what it means. He wants to emphasise the process of signification rather than significance per se. All around there is an increased reflexivity. That the post-structuralists, the semiologists and the ethnomethodologists have encountered difficulties in breaking from the anchorage of the language of pure structure is not surprising. A fully and exclusively processual orientation, together with the necessary reflexivity, is notoriously difficult to sustain - not least because our everyday language is habituated towards the figures of structure.

The concept of structure cannot be done away with or seriously devalued, if only because so much of modern language is so heavily imbued with it already. But mishandled it is liable to assert itself as a reified objectivity. It inveighs itself too readily when our thought struggles with its own reflexivity. When we are not alive to the processes by which our thought develops, or when we take only the

content of our conceptualisations without being reflexively aware of the processes of their own production. It is then that the ready-made explanatory force of 'structure' is liable to immediately step into the breach.

Where structuralism aspires to provide "a form or function organised according to an internal legality in which elements have meaning only in the solidarity of their correlation or their opposition", more often it slides into "the search for the origin and foundation of the structure" (Derrida 1978. p.157). The explanation goes beyond the weave of relations. It seems that where we submit to a 'rage for order', then we are likely to turn to the language of structure. Structure and its linguistic and conceptual environs offers the shelter of order and stability. But, as Derrida again points out, we gain a totality, a panoramic form at the expense of the 'force' of the structure. We lose the process; we lose the movement within the frame.

> "Thanks to a more or less openly acknowledged schematization and spatialization, one can glance over the field divested of its force more freely or diagrammatically."
>
> (1978 p.5)

Structure freezes meaning; holds it still in form so that we can examine it: it shackles the play of differences. Or as Derrida (ibid. p.5) has it, there is a "neutralisation of meaning by form". Structure, too, is only a mere paraphrasing of what is already known. It re-presents in its spatial geometric patterning, what is already experienced as something else - but less ordered; less totalised.

Structure is sought and found in the proliferation of language and meaning; in the run of everyday experience. Much structuralism and formalism following Saussure reduced linguistic complexity to the type of oppositional binary patterning already referred to. It came under the compulsive logic of 'black-white'; 'life-death'. It is

this kind of bi-polar relational categorising that underpins the psychologically rooted approaches to meaning embodied in, say, Osgood's semantic differential (1967) and Kelly's (1955) personal construct theories. The pervasiveness of such digitalised thinking in society against the privileged status of the binary opposition. It is demonstrably possible to transcend such modes of discourse (ironically shown by the existence of analog computers). The capacity for sharp differentiation, whilst perhaps being a type of psychological compulsion, is naturally and constantly undermined by the metaphorical nature of language; by ever present ambiguity; and by its capacity to proliferate meanings. Central to the post-structuralist activity is a reconsideration of those relations and a critique of structuralisms 'actual' reliance on metaphor, and a further call to recognise the 'openness' of language. In the case of Derrida the crucial binary structures that he seeks to 'deconstruct' could be considered as: 'literature-science', 'truth-untruth', 'presence-absence'.

Structure need not be related only in terms of some abstract objectified pattern: fixed and stable. Indeed the original Saussurean view should have led to a view of structure as a ceaseless <u>activity</u> of difference. Structure is not necessarily a pre-given, determining 'something' already 'there' in the text or the discourse or in the interactional relationships. It is not there prior to the constructive acts of the 'reader'. Nor, at a broader level need it be conceived of at some deep level in language; prior to and determining of instances of articulation.

There is a further rejection that structures of meaning are somehow prefigured in the human mind. Structure is not taken to correspond to some iniate 'set' or pattern of mind that establishes and constrains the limits of intelligibility. There is a movement

here, as Ricouer (1973) points out, away from any Kantian inspired project. There would presumably be some clash with the work of Bateson (1972) on some interpretations and declarations of his ultimate direction.

There has been a tendency to elevate the signified amongst interpreters of Saussure. Structuralist writers have found it easy to give an implicit primacy to the signified. This is a primacy that at root depends upon the assumption that the signified has a direct relationship to a real referent. This bond is held to be natural and non-arbitrary. On some versions this is said to be assured by supposing an intimate and immediate relationship, a bond, between the mind and this real referent. The arbitrariness of the signifier - signified relation is underwritten by a 'natural' relation between signified and the mind and a real referent. The original indivisibility of the sign is ruptured here; the signified is stretched away and slithers towards the metaphysical. The latent rift between the signifier and the signified is exploited by those who seek to relocate meaning in a pre-figured structure that exists prior to its realisation in individual acts of speech.

Derrida (1977), in his 'deconstruction' of Saussure, is far from advocating a denial of Saussure's contribution. On the contrary, his approach acknowledges a monumental debt to Saussure. But he takes issue with Saussure, and more particularly subsequent structuralists, for not being sufficiently reflexive of their own position. He claims that their programme subverts itself by its failure to recognise the free-play of signifiers in their own discourse. They are thereby held to be 'blind' to the metaphoricity of their language; a figural language that surrepticiously reintroduces static conceptions of structure and an underpinning of metaphysical presence

with a transcendent subject ultimately regrounding the signified in the real world.

Derrida is most forcibly struck by the disparity between the promise of structuralism and its actual practice. The Saussurean project held the promise of a theory of language and meaning that escaped the retreat to metaphysics and the interminable traumas that entails; that indeed offered the possibility of a truly materialist theory of language. But its practice seems to revert to an ultimate metaphysical grounding that lies beyond the ceaseless interplay of relations of difference. Meaning is removed from the processual, emergent conception of networks of evershifting relations of non-positive terms and relocated in some traditional metaphysical points. Meaning is removed from language and returned to Nature, or to intentional consciousness. At least then to a familiar and weary metaphysics of presence. There is, in the language of much structuralism a metaphorical language that reinstates 'form' over 'force': a static pre-figured structure over structuration and that which goes on, in and through structure. It reverts to a mode of discourse that gives promise of a method of 'interpretation' by which the 'wildness' of language and meaning is tamed, and intelligibility and order is imposed and guaranteed. Structuralism becomes yet another <u>method</u>; another meta-language with the assumed authority to provide the warrant for a certitude of formulation. The potential relativity of meaning is harnessed. Structuralism, when it takes this form, offers to <u>close</u> the text by manufacturing <u>an</u> interpretation, <u>A</u> reading, <u>A</u> meaning. It closes the text by giving to the reader the resolution of all questions of meaning - its formulation is deemed to capture meaning fully and absolutely - it is then offered up to the reader as <u>the</u> ordered and authoritative account.

Foucault places his disappointment with structuralism on a similar plane to Derrida. He places its failure within the broader context of western philosophy and what he refers to as the logocentric fallacy. For him, its failure to fulfil its promise arises from its regression to a realm of practice that continues, what he interprets as, the 'crisis' of western philosophy; a crisis:

> "that concerns the transcendental reflection with which philosophy since Kant has identified itself; which concerns the theme of the origin, that promise of the return, by which we avoid the difference of our present which concerns an anthropological idea that orders all these questions around the question of man's being, and allows us to avoid an analysis of practice; which concerns all humanistic ideologies; which above all, concerns the status of the subject."
>
> (Foucault 1969)

Structuralism, although moving closer than most, finally eschews getting to grips with that 'crisis' by "pursuing the pleasant games of genesis and system, synchrony and development, relation and cause, structure and history" (ibid). Like Derrida, he bemoans the primacy afforded to the signified, to static structure and to formal system at the expense of process and practice and 'force'. Foucault's unique contribution is to link that criticism to another; that of structuralisms failure to analyse discourse's crucial position in the relations of power. But more of Foucault's positive contribution later.

The fact that structuralism had become operable as a method became a matter of major concern to that group that became known as the post-structuralists. Barthes became aware that 'Mythologies' (1973) could be interpreted as a meta-text, as another method for providing the 'objective function of decipherer' of the workings of myth in culture. But it, too, was unreflexive of its own position as discourse. The post-structuralist doctrine deliberately eschews method. They are not concerned to provide us with a new set of encapsulating practices and methods which we can then re-employ to

interpret, to 'read' texts or understand social phenomena. To do so would be to run the risk of reinstating a meta-language of critical practice to replace those debunked. It would give the false impression that their work can be utilised as guides to the comprehension of a text.

Doubling Up

Part of the problem here concerns the very possibility of saying something new in one discourse about something encountered in another, or in another semiological system. It is a question we shall encounter more fully when we consider the problem of reflexivity. Consider the position of the traditional anthropologist studying some strange alien culture. Such a culture would have its own self-contained, reflexive epistemological system with its own concomitant discourse. How then, is the anthropologist to provide an account and/or description of their modes of being? His usual and professional discourse is operable on an entirely different code: founded on a different epistemological system. How can he avoid doing violence to the native discourse and epistemology by the imposition of his own as he struggles to re-present theirs in familiar and recognisable ways. A simple recasting of their discourse; a descriptive representation, fails to help us, his western readers, gain entry into their world. If simply transcribed, their discourse remains mysterious and inaccessible to our own modes of understanding; the researcher has done nothing more than transpose the puzzle from its indigenous position, and place it before an audience that can only apprehend it from within their own codes and epistemologies. But if the researcher attempts to interpret the discourse and perform some critical practice,

he will do so from within his particular codes and epistemologies. He will be forced to impose his methods of structuration onto the native culture. That culture as understood and acted upon by the natives is thereby changed and becomes something other. The trap crashes shut.

The same problem is encountered in all interpretive and critical practices, including those of literature and philosophy. In those fields there are methods that treat of the problem (or text) under consideration in ways that entail that the problem or text is effectively duplicated or entirely doubled. The original text is falsely resolved by being doubled in the text of the philosopher or critic. The New Critics started the criticism of traditional literary criticism. With the texts of classic realism the meaning and truth was taken to be there, encased in the text, put there by the author and given to the passive reader. The critic sharing that view only had to fully discover that enclosed truth and make it available to less able readers. It was encumbent upon him only to offer a paraphrase of the original work - a re-stating.

For Derrida (1978) the problem goes deeper. Such critical/philosophical texts declare a complete covering of the problem or text they aim to reveal and explain. They claim, too often, a treatment in total; a closure of the problem or the text. They claim to have fully laid bare the meaning that was taken to have been residing in the first text all the time. The secondary text is laid over the original; is said to, as it were, absorb it, and to exhaust its sense.

The view of meaning adopted here, however, would deny that any critical text can ever fully duplicate the original. The meaning is not so fixed in the text for all time and in one form; placed there by the author and owner of the text. The possible meanings of any text are multi-form and absolute dis(closure), not possible. There

is no one single meaning in the text that is discoverable by the enlightened critic. Furthermore, the 'writing' (in Derrida's expanded sense - see 'Of Grammatology' 1967:1974) of the critic involves his text in the possibility always of creating something fresh. Indeed it will almost inevitably be a separate text in its own right. The false closure of an ensnaring system placed over the original text must always fail to fix the potential meanings residing therein: something will always, ineluctably escape. Any critical practice, any written formulation, itself creates new possibilities. The supposed closure, the encompassing structure of the critical text has its own bounds ruptured by and within its own writing.

The urge to offer-up critical texts that are declared as a complete covering of the original stems from the critics belief that the original has a stability, coherence and manifest meaning that is fixed in the text. As such it is discoverable, and representable by the critic to stand over the original. What results,in Derrida's view is a "self-effacing and respectful redoubling (of the text) by commentary" (ibid. p.227). Such a re-doubling rests on the conception of a static, unitary meaning apparent in the original problem/text. In a self-confirmatory manner, the 'discovery' and presentation of a formal systematisation in the secondary text is taken as evidence of its existence in the original. The structures and forms seemingly fixed 'on the paper' by the act of writing, are mistaken for real ones in the phenomena originally spoken of. This is the same practice engaged in by traditional sociological theorising.

Derrida characterises the process as wholly 'teleological'. By this I take him to mean that a study of a problem or a reading of a text, is guided by some notion of system that it is supposed will eventually become apparent and which will encompass and 'explain' the problem/text. It is the supposed structure that draws forth the meaning.

Such a 'teleological' approach forecloses on the possibilities of meaning in the text, it forces a repression of that which eludes the supposed system. Derrida, for one, seeks to prevent such repression; to allow the forces of language to expose their richness; he eschews the penitentiary of 'helpful' structural forms.

There is some connection here with the sort of argument encountered in Glaser and Strauss (1967) in relation to their notion of 'grounded theory'. They, too, urge a caution in the application of a priori structures and presuppositions to the phenomena under consideration. They point to the effect of such a practice on that which is 'found' in the phenomena. What is discoverable becomes a function of what the pre-formed structures allow, predict or tutor the researcher to expect and see.

All this leaves unresolved problems of how a critical practice should, then, be conducted and written. I shall have to return to that issue later not least because a developed conception of an alternative critical practice is founded upon a certain rethinking of the notion of sign and associated notions.

Rethinking Sign

To return, then, to the theme of Barthes' shift of emphasis. Wary of meta-language, particularly when it becomes unreflexive and therefore blind to the processes of its own signification. It fails to notice its own metaphorical base. Any semiological exercise must remain aware that as discourse its own concepts and signifiers are ineluctably bound up with the signifying processes it professes to analyse elsewhere. Barthes, then, came to insist that structuralism can only be thought of as an unceasing activity and not as a method.

For Barthes the emphasis is on style. Style becomes central and not peripheral. He displays, in his own style, how all discourse is dependent on style. His writing explores the possibilities of style: it is a self-conscious exercise and thus revealing of the figurative play of language. Like modernist literature, his works' self-referencing style draws attention to itself, and alerts the reader to the effects of style and the processes of signification. The distinction between style and content begins to dissolve and is shown to be vacuous. Structuralism, as method, effaces style. It offers an illusion of an overarching ordering, and a clear content untrammeled by stylistic considerations. It is blind therefore to the inevitable rhetorical play of its own language.

To ignore style, to ban rhetoric from the centre of discourse, is to revert the Saussurean promise embodied in the 'play of differences' to the stasis of meta-language. In so doing it enters the old game of searching for meaning in some place anterior to the productivity of signs that ultimately convey it. In those versions of formal structuralism, the signifier continues to be devalued; it is seen as a 'sensible' token. The signified regains its primacy by being the ground of meaning; an 'intelligible' concept. Meaning is said to reside beyond the possibilities of the signifier, in the smooth passage from signifier to signified and the signifieds further relation to something concrete, discoverable and enduring. The realm of the signifier is seen as the material artifact of language behind which lies a 'true' and intelligible realm of meaning. On such a reading, a critical text comes to propose a unity and fixity of meaning - to offer a coherent and total interpretation. It is not alive to its own rhetorical nature and operation. A developed critical practice should, rather, be fully reflexive, revealing of the rhetorical

nature of other texts, and self-consciously aware, and making use of, its own figural and textual activity.

A fully social semiology can be seen as a move towards the exposure of the modes of articulation by which people 'construct' reality. To this extent at least, it shares much with the ethnomethodological programme. Such a semiological practice shuns any attempt to reduce language and meaning to any pre-linguistic 'reality'. Barthes detects in Saussure the vestiges of such a reduction. It stems from that same dichotomy that Derrida finds most displeasing in Saussure; that between langue and parole. In Saussure's writing there is ultimately a primacy given over to language (as system) at the expense of speech. It comes to entail that the meaning of speech is reducible to, and locatable in, the bedrock system of langue. Langue becomes, in some hands, a reified, total system lying beneath (as deep structure?) the instances of its manifestation in speech articulation. This may not have been Saussure's own sense of the division (his notion of langue was actually more sophisticated) but is the way it has tended to develop. Silverman and Torode (1980) see this as a positing of "the meaning of one discourse of signs (speech) is to be found in another discourse of signs (the system of language)." Such a procedure is incapacitating since:

> "What neither (they ascribe a similar movement to Husserl) acknowledges is that the capacity of a discourse of signs to refer to another reality outside that discourse, whether it be a further discourse of signs, or some other reality, must lie within that same discourse of signs. This capacity ... involves not the underlying structure of discourse but discourse's own structuration."
>
> (p.262)

Note how this point touches on that made earlier about the problem of duplicating.

The original distinction; signifier-signified, thus comes to some difficulty. Especially in the way it is treated by some of the structuralists. The original notion of the sign as representing a relationship between these two indivisible elements and their combined contribution to the meaning of the sign is sundered. Meaning has come to be related only to the signified and its relationship to something external to the linguistic relations embodied in utterances on occasions of their use. Meaning becomes static, structural and unitary.

In Barthes' and others re-investigation of the sign, there is a return to an emphasis on the position of the signifier. Meaning can only be said to exist in the 'moving play of signifiers'. Meaning is derived from the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships between signifiers that extends in a 'seamless web', ever changing and in constant process of coalescence and disintegration. Meaning is always in process, always emerging; not anchored to a permanent signified itself rooted in a stable reality. As Laplanche and Leclaire (1966) point out:

> "If a signifier refers to a signified, it is only through the mediation of the entire system of signifiers: there is no signifier that doesn't refer to the absence of others and that is not defined by its position in the system."
>
> (p.154)

But system here should not refer to a stable and settled arrangement but to a shifting network of relations in activity and related to the emerging patternings of the realisation of those relations in actual utterances. Still, here it is the relation of signifiers that becomes crucial, not relations of signified to something other, nor even the relationship between signifiers and signifieds. A signifier has relations of difference and similarity only in relation to all other elements in the signifying chain.

I would confess here to a rising, sickening vertigo. The displacement of the signified leaves meaning in a circulation amongst relations of signifier. Rather like searching for the meaning of a word in a dictionary where each definition takes you on to a fresh, new word with its own set of definitional relations; some referring back tautologously, some taking you further in. But that vertigo is indicative of the radicalness of the conception and the entrenchment of the commonsense view that words refer to things and that things have meaning. Derrida delights in the vertigo. The central paradox of language for him is that, although meaning resides in difference; a difference normally embodied in the notion of 'sign', whilst the notion of sign itself seems inescapably linked to a sense as "sign-of, signifier referring to a signified, signifier different from its signified." (Derrida 1970. p.250)

The notion of sign ultimately fails to escape the metaphysics of a centre (to the structure), a presence to root meaning in. But the notion of sign, with its differential meaning, is the crucial weapon for attacking the notion of presence. But then a second shimmering paradox rises when the attempt is made to decentre structure, to make it an active process. When the point is reached where:

> "in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse...when everything became a system where the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the interplay of signification ad infinitum."
>
> (ibid. p.249)

then that is precisely when the notion of sign itself must be brought into question. But this sort of circular trap is encountered with all concepts related to metaphysics. For, at its simplest, "There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics"..."We have no

language...which is alien to this history; we cannot utter a single destructive proposition which has not already slipped into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest." (ibid. p.250).

There is an inevitable gagging produced by a confrontation with that which subverts our taken-for-granted when one realises that at this point the very notion of interpretation is itself in danger. By proposing a theory of meaning in which sense is derived only from the play of differences between signifiers, there is nothing other than more signifiers to which each refers. More broadly, if a sign only refers to another sign, then what, we may ask, is there to interpret? As Foucault says, "If interpretation can never accomplish itself, it is simply because there is nothing to interpret." (cited by Donato 1970). Nothing is offered for interpretation, since nothing is referenced but other signs; each sign then, acting as an interpretation of other signs. As Donato states:

> "Interpretation then is nothing but sedimenting one layer of language upon another to produce an illusory depth which gives us the temporary spectacle of things beyond words. Yet this momentary fixation is dependent always on re-establishing that very subject which we had begun by denouncing."
>
> (1970. p.96)

Donato is referring here to a human subjectivity, but the argument would be the same, if Derridean, if 'subject' were replaced by 'presence' or 'origin'. The above quote bares directly on the points made by Derrida above. Some may sense a threatening nihilism: a nihilism that to a large degree stems from the influence of Nietzsche.

The point then is not necessarily to dispense with the notions of sign or signified altogether; it would be unrealistic and ultimately

self-defeating to simply banish certain words of this magnitude from discourse. The stressing of the signifier is not intended to condemn the signified to meaninglessness (a tyrannical and impossible 'closure' in any case). Rather it is an attempt to redress an imbalance. The bar is lowered: the distinction between the two is dissolved. The original sense of the sign is reinstated. All words are both signifier and signified. But there can be no meaning at all independent of the signifying system. Each sign has a sense or meaning only by reference to its articulated distance, its 'play', from other members of the system. Derrida's (and originally Saussure's) use of 'jeu' is not without significance. It connotes a sense of movement, of changing position. The articulated distance between signs are not formal and static, but are forever shifting, emerging and fading. There is no real possibility of obtaining a fixity of form or structure on the system prior to its realisation in particular utterances.

The significance of the rejection of the signifier-signified distinction is that meaning circulates entirely within the system of language. More importantly, a linguistic system is not a means of mere commentary on a supposed 'real' world. There is not a separated and hierarchical relation with a world of things and a language system to represent it. The world of things in terms of its meaning, is only there in language - it can only find meaning in the 'play' of language. Language articulates the world, it delineates it totally and holds its possibilities within it.

Productivity, Plurality and Deferment

With his (anti-) concept of 'writing', Derrida introduces the full element of free-play and undecidability that is the nature of language. Meaning is endlessly displaced and deferred. Not least

it is dispersed across, what becomes for the post-structuralists, an extended sense of text. As Barthes puts it, "the Text (is) experienced only as an activity, a production" (1977 p.75) and "The Text...practices the infinite deferral of the signified...the Text is dilatory; its field is that of the signifier." The signifier has the greatest significance, it does not need reference back to some signified rooted in the metaphysics of presence, its sense is linked to the idea of 'play' - the shifting relations of difference between elements.

Text becomes, then, an important point of analytic focus; its theoretical nature and its place in relation to the events at Tridy will be explored in more detail later. For now, Derrida's extreme concept of dissemination provides some indication of the direction in which language as text and textuality takes us. Text has no structure, no centre or origin, it cannot be captured as a totality. As Said, E. describes it:

> "Dissemination maintains the perpetual disruption of writing, maintains the fundamental undecidability of texts, whose real power resides not in their polysemousness (which after all can be collected hermeneutically under the heading of several themes) but texts whose power lies in the possibility of their infinite generality and multiplicity."
>
> (Said, E. 1979. p.693)

It is not only the possibility of several elaborations of meaning, it is a more fundamental dispersal, a ceaseless activity and productivity in which meaning continues to proliferate. Barthes moves in the same direction by declaring that there is:

> "No construction of the text: everything signifies ceaselessly and several times, but without being delegated to a great final ensemble, to an ultimate structure."
>
> ("S/Z" p.12)

The fundamental decentreing of the text created by such notions naturally denies the privileging of one position of intelligibility in relation to the text; there are numerous positions of intelligibility: the text is thereby open to a plurality of meanings. As Barthes rightly points out, this is not to say merely that a text may have several meanings inscribed in the text by the author, "but that it accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an irreducible (and not merely an acceptable) plural (Barthes 1977 p.159). A plurality derived not from its denotational content but from its productivity, from its 'weave of signifiers' and also constituted by the inter-textual (very simply, all texts echo, have reference to other text, the meaning of one text is determined, at least in part by its relation to other texts.)

Neither is it simply that different readers at different times will bring something new to a new text and produce different meanings, although this is the case too. Rather it is in the nature and definition of meaning itself that it is ineluctably plural:

> "...it does not imply that there are several meanings and that the truth of the interpretation is dependent upon the contingency of critical approaches, the arbitrary choice of a point of view, procedure or method of analysis, or the opportuness (not to say opportunism) of a historical, social and cultural position of critical discourse. It signifies rather that meaning is plural, that the possible, the latent, and the divergent enter into its very definition - not just into its speculative definition, but also into its concrete production, be it that of the writer or that of the reader, of the emitter or the receiver of the message at different moments of history and at different places in the world and in culture."
>
> (Louis Marin 1979. p.239)

Meaning is produced in the displacement and relations of signifiers, a movement that cannot be enclosed by an interpretative method that imposes a prefigured structure.

Context

The post-structuralist enterprise then does a number of important things in relation to this thesis. Firstly, it provides a comprehensive and significant theory of meaning. Its implications require an entirely different approach to the research activity than that suggested by the preceding section. That implied methodology will be tackled shortly. But it certainly shifts the ground as far as definition of the situation is concerned. For instance, this view of meaning does away with any need to delve into any supposed intentionality at the heart of the definitional process. It moves towards a consideration of defining situations as a signifying practice. It prevents an interpretative practice in which the meaning, or even meanings, of participation can be hermeneutically collected and collated into a neat structured arrangement. The implications for the definitional process will be revealed in the subsequent practice in passim but may need returning to more formally later.

It is also, however, somewhat troublesome. Firstly, it is troublesome at that Nietzschean point where Derrida tends towards a nihilism where meaning is entirely textual, constantly moving from signifier to signifier. A textuality that can never be fully revealed, where it relates to nothing beyond itself. Meaning is endlessly deferred, always becoming, never complete and present. Where meaning is endlessly and ceaselessly proliferating, and further, where, following Nietzsche,language is always and only rhetorical.

It is the point where Foucault takes issue with Derrida. Foucault accuses Derrida of pedagogy (see E.W. Said 1978 p.702). He criticises him for an intellectual elitism and feyness by engaging in interminable linguistic games that fail always to engage anything that affects people's life concerns. He criticises him for being concerned only with a 'reading' of a text and for seeing text as

nothing more than 'traces' found there by the reader. For Foucault text is important because it inhabits an element of power - it is part of the network of power whose textual form is a purposeful obscuring of power beneath (or in) textuality and knowledge. Texts are to be seen as discursive events related to the place of discourse in the struggle for power. Derrida fails to accept the fact that practically words do work (see Austin 1962). As Said (1978. p.703) the two hold different notions of praxis of text. We will return to Foucault's relation of text to discourse and the struggle for power much later. Foucault provides one way of moving beyond pure textuality to something beyond, he provides a point of contact with the social formation.

The second point of trouble is related. The concern thus far may appear overly linguistic, an analysis that remains suspended in a rarified atmosphere of a language somewhat divorced from the pragmatic realities of everyday organisational life. However, the consideration of meaning embodied here is not confined to purely literary and written sources - it is a complete theory of meaning relating equally to utterances produced in social situations.

However, I admit to feeling some encumbence to broaden what has been a more or less linguistic semiotic to encompass some notion of a wider social semiotic that has something to say about the social context of meaning.

This felt obligation is perhaps misplaced and only engendered by an immersion in a confining academic tradition. It is a tension I have felt also in the compulsion to order and structure my responses to my 'data' in formal and traditional ways, as if comfort and security would be found in recycling those methods in spite of their relevance or otherwise to the project at hand.

It is fundamentally a sociological compulsion, to formulate

answers to questions about my data from at least somewhere within the sociological discourse. However, I view it as not necessary, but perhaps desirable. It is perhaps relevant however that a solely linguistic semiotic does not take us far enough into the issues of language as behaviour rather than language for its own sake, or language as knowledge.

I am further encouraged by numerous injunctions to consider social meanings contextually; that context certainly being formed by the linguistic element (including both syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations), but also including some conception of the social context. Douglas (1971) refers to the determination of human events being explainable only by reference to the "situational context". He goes on to identify at least two important kinds of context in the determination of meaning: the linguistic context, and the practical (use) context (1971. p.38). Coming at it from a slightly different angle, Gowler and Legge (1980) make reference to the "process of categorisation" that "provides a flexible and multiform framework of meaning". They further identify two "analytically distinct determinants of the process of categorisation" that are in reciprocal relation. The two are graphically represented as the vertical and horizontal axis of a grid that forms the framework of meaning.

> "(i) the horizontal axis represents a modification of the 'Whorfian hypothesis', which asserts that our categorisation of the world is patterned by the structure of language (Berstein 1971; Whorf 1941)

and

> (ii) the vertical axis represents a modification of the socio-inguistic perspective, which asserts that our categorisation of the world is a function of language embedded in the experience, performance and anticipation of social interaction. (Cicourel 1973; Giglioli 1972)."

The issue of the contextualised or decontextualised determination of meaning is a particularly thorny one and one that I do not propose to deal with at great length at this juncture. I would once again refer the reader to Wootton's (1975) excellent treatment of the problems and attempted solutions. However, there are perhaps a number of points that could be usefully couched on here.

For instance, Douglas (ibid) notes that it is Pierce (the founder of American semiotics) who proposed the term 'indexical' to refer to the practical (use) context of the determination of meaning. The notion of indexicality was taken up most rigorously by Garfinkel and the ethnomethodologists and becomes one of the major concepts that seriously challenges any notion of the decontextualised determination of meaning, whilst at the same time providing severe difficulties for any fully contextualised interpretation of meaning.

Wootton demonstrates that the decontextualisation of meaningful utterances, either on the basis of referential or nominalist theories of meaning, or on the basis of semantic field theories such as those propounded by Fodor and Katz (1962), make the task of extracting an adequate formulation of meaningful utterances extremely problematic (except for severely limited purposes).

Wootton travels towards the ethnomethodologists and finds some comfort, but there is still a sense of unease at the end of his book. But having rejected decontextualised approaches to the social determination of meaning, one is still left with the difficulties of explaining exactly what the inclusion of context entails. What does it mean to consider the meaning of utterances and words as decipherable only in relation to the contexts of their use. It is perhaps the ethnomethodologists more than any others that have taken that problem seriously and have delved most deeply into it. I am less

concerned here with the positive aspects of their programme than with the devilish problems their investigations have thrown up and that their positive programme is an attempt to come to terms with. The problems I have in mind are those covered by the concepts of 'indexicality', 'reflexivity' and 'literal description'. It should be noted that the terms are not really independent but inextricably interrelated, and indeed closely connected with other terms in the positive aspects of their programme.

With respect to the first 'problem', that of indexicality, there is a considerable lack of unanimity as to what it entials in detail. Much of that argument centres on whether or not Garfinkel intended to completely dissolve the distinction between 'objective' and 'indexical expressions' and assert the universality of indexical expressions (see Abercrombie 1974; Barnes and Law 1976). On a second front the debate focuses on Garfinkel's alleged radical position that sociology's traditional task of the substitutability of objective expressions for indexical is both unnecessary and unwarranted. Indexical expressions, in mundane social life, already perform the achievement of order and sense that objective expressions employed 'scientifically' are said to accomplish. Meanings of utterance are occasioned by their use in contexts. Talk accomplishes order and reality it is not a mere comment on it. Indexical expressions have ordered properties (Garfinkel 1967). (For a discussion of this issue see O'Keefe 1979; Attewell, 1974.) The last issue concerns whether 'practices' by which order is accomplished are invariant and transituational or not (see Coulter 1979; J. Phillips 1976 and J. Heritage 1977). The issue is somewhat confused. The way out of the dilemma may lie in a full explication of the positive features of the ethnomethodological programme, but that is beyond the scope of this work.

The second 'problem', that of reflexivity is equally obtuse and its consideration equivocal. An exposition that I found most illuminating is to be found in Mehan and Wood (1978 pp.8-10). The example draws on Evans-Pritchard's seminal work on the Azande (Evans-Pritchard 1937). The Azande people operate on an oracular epistemology. In deciding on important issues, they seek counsel from an oracle. This, sometimes, takes the form of extracting substances from the bark of a particular tree. This substance is treated in ways precisely and ritualistically defined. When such preparation is complete, the consultation with the oracle can proceed. The issue is formulated as a question that can be answered as either a yes or a no. The substance is then fed to a chicken. Whether the chicken dies or not provides for the answer required.

For really important decisions, they undertake a second performance. The substance is fed to a second chicken, but here the chickens life or death represents a reversal of the previous 'answer'.

An expected interpretation from a person from our culture might be to conclude that the bark substance contains a mild poison that is likely to prove fatally harmful to some chickens but not others. We would consider this practice as a fruitless, irrational and primitively superstitious way of reaching decisions. More importantly, our logic tells us to expect numerous contradictions arising from the procedure. Internal contradictions relating to the ritual procedures, especially on the two-test pattern. And contradictions arising from subsequent events in relation to the oracle's advice. We may seriously question the IQ of the Azande indians for failing to notice these contradictions and logical flaws and for continuing to believe in the oracle.

However, as Mehan/Wood validly point out, these are <u>our</u> perceived contradictions, noticeable from the perspective of our logic,

science and culture. "Westerners look at oracular practices to determine if in fact there is an oracle. The Azande know that an oracle exists. That is their beginning premise. All that subsequently happens they experience from that beginning assumption." (p.9)

Mehan/Wood refer to such premises as "incorrigible propositions". They are unquestioned, taken-for-granted, virtually immutable principles at the very bedrock of an epistemology. We should not be deluded into imagining that we too do not have our own versions. They are fully assertive and affirmatory in relation to successive levels of ontological inquiry. They axiomatically underpin "any and every conceivable state of affairs". "It is not so much a faith about a fact in the world as a faith in the facticity of the world itself." (p.9)

The reality and force of the oracle is never questioned, indeed, it is to all intents and purposes unquestionable. This is not to say that the Azande have reality blind spots; when events occur, that from our perspective, appear contradictory they are noticed, but seen and handled differently. Thus if the oracle's advice is seen to not hold up, this is never taken as evidence for the ultimate fallibility of the oracle, rather 'secondary elaborations of belief' (Evans-Pritchard 1937 p.330) are invoked that justify the situation. In other words, the epistemological system built upon the oracular principle has a convoluted 'logic' and mystical language that operates as an infrastructural support to the basic principle. The oracle simply, unquestionably is. Events cannot count as instances of falsification or denial, but as things to be explained by reference to the infrastructure.

> "Let the reader consider any argument that would utterly demolish all Zande claims for the power of the oracle. If it were translated into Zande modes of thought it would serve to support their entire structure of belief. For their mystical notions are eminently coherent, being interrelated by a network of logical ties, and are so ordered that they never too crudely contradict sensory

> experience, but, instead, experience seems to justify them."
>
> (Evans-Pritchard 1957 p.319-20)

What, from one perspective, are viewable as indications of oracular fallability, are from Azande perspective elaborated in just those ways that provide sufficient grounds for the complete affirmation of the power of the oracle. It is in this sense that reality is considered as a 'reflexive activity'. As Mehan/Wood have it "Beginning with the incorrigible belief in oracles, all events reflexively become evidence for that belief." (p.10)

As Maruyama (1969) clearly shows, the notion of a universal epistemology has been thoroughly discredited. Epistemology exhibits distinctive cultural boundedness. Patterns of thinking at the most basic level can be shown to vary in fundamental ways across cultures. Maruyama presents a list of such patterns, or rather some of the very core structures of thinking that alone or in combination provide the basic grounds for such patternings. For instance, we might talk about basic structures of religion: the monotheism of Christianity and Mohammedanism; polytheism of certain ancient western civilisations or the total harmony of man, nature, spirits, animals and ghosts present in Navojo epistemology. In relation to the latter, Castaneda (1968) attempts to translate the reality of Yakui sorcery. In this reality it is totally acceptable for men to turn into animals and animals into men; and for men and animals to converse.

Basic notions relating to time, to logic, to social structure, to cosmology etc. vary cross-culturally and provide incorrigible foundations for specific epistemologies. Maruyama (1974) partially characterises western epistemology as founded upon a hierarchical, unidirectional and homogenistic logic. There is really no question of asserting the 'truth' of one epistemic system over another. It

is the basic reflexivity of such systems which entails that each encountered operation of that system both draws upon and reaffirms its fundamental, incorrigible principles.

It is, of course, the language system in which this epistemic system is embodied and which provides most readily the grounds for reflexivity. Language can be seen both as a representation of a particular complex reality, but also as the means by which the structures of that reality are constructed and reconstructed. The ordering and incorrigibility of the epistemic foundations are achieved and reaffirmed by being constantly articulated, by being embedded in a language system that is there both to reflect those foundations and to constantly, by use, reconstitute them. Guirard (1971) presents knowledge as residing in a relationship between an epistemological system (signified) and a semiological system (signifying); that relationship being explorable by the means of semiology. It is not necessary here to advocate a referential theory in which the epistemological system is seen as an objective reality 'out there' (as they say) upon which the semiological system merely comments. Guirard (for instance) from a different perspective, also reflects the epistemological diversity inherent in cultures. With his emphasis on semiology, he refers to the basic structures in terms of 'codes'. Each code is a semological embodiment of a particular epistemological system, and each code in its deployment reflexively supports that system. All things encountered by the epistemological system are handled within and by that code in ways that make them sensible to the system; and this very 'making-sense' itself reaffirms the system.

The last 'problem', literal description need not concern us over much since the post-structuralists emphasis upon the inevitable tropological and purely relation conception of language and meaning already casts the notion of literal description into a fresh light. For a

treatment from within the ethnomethodological perspective see Sacks, H. 1963; Goldthorpe, J.H. 1973, and from a slightly different angle, see Rommetveit 1978.

The ethnomethodologists are to be praised for their serious attempts to come to terms with these issues. There is much of value in their enterprise some of which could well have stood in the place of the preferred practice employed here; indeed there are some very significant points of commonality. However, the ethnomethodological enterprise is in a rather confusing state with important divisions resting within it. There is not much commonality between, say, Schegloff, E.A. (1972) and that of Cicourel, A. (e.g. 1973). It divides significantly at its limits, and those points where it takes its own philosophical imperatives seriously. Some of the fuller implications of reflexivity lead to the kind of exercise engaged in by Blum et al (1974). Others turn back from the burgeoning relativism and nihilism that their approach, like the post-structuralists', slides towards. Writers like Cicourel have been described as reverting to a psychologism or to advocating deep structure. Even Garfinkel has been characterised (Silverman and Torode 1980) as engaged in, at base, a traditional hermeneutic interpretive practice (as opposed to a purely interrogative one). The proposal of invariant and transituational 'practices' is also interpretable as a reversion to deep structure, to a renewed metaphysical delving for the Source.

However what remains apparent from this excursion into the ethnomethodological programme is that we have not escaped language. Ethnomethodologists concern to contextualise meaning via the consideration of indexicality and reflexivity still operates at the level of linguistic context.

I want to assert now, then, that any consideration of context keeps us in the bounds of a semiological practice. As we shall see later, even non-linguistic, physical features of situations can be interpreted in terms of their status as signs and their place in the signifying process.

We have already seen with Guirard (1971) that our epistemic systems are embedded in forms of discourse - a language code as he terms it. It is not too fanciful to suggest then that culture (as one version of social reality) is a particular arrangement of relations of meaning - that is a semiotic construct. Thus if meaning is interpretable within a sociocultural context, and culture is itself a semiotic construction, then the sociocultural context can be located within a linguistic arrangement, indeed the context is created by that arrangement. Or largely in linguistic terms - the context is a semiotic system, a relation of meaningful signs, some of which will not necessarily be embedded in linguistic form.(It is perhaps a matter for debate whether non-linguistic signs are ultimately reducible to language signs.)

From another point of view the context of an interaction or the 'context of situation' (Malinowski 1948) is only that which is already meaningful to those in the situation. Almost tautologously those aspects of the situation that have some impact on the determination of the meaning of utterances are already those features that have meaning to the interactants. This has some relation to the point about selective attention made earlier. The relevant context is that which is attended to. In that sense, then, the context of the situation is already part of a meaning system - already a semiotic construct. The non-linguistic features of a situation that have any impact on verbal meaning are those features that can already be positioned in a discourse - can already

be spoken of in meaningful ways.

For instance the 'context of situation' of a Catholic Church in Rome may help determine the meaning of utterances in that context only because features of that context are locatable within discourses; discourses of theology, discourses of architecture, discourses of geography and other mundane discourses perhaps related to decorum for instance.

This applies also to role relations within the 'context of situation' which again may be expected to have an effect on the determination of meaning. Such roles too, are articulated from within particular known discourses and are understood and made meaningful from a position of intelligibility within that discourse. The role relation superior (captain) - subordinate (private) is meaningful as a relation of difference within a military discourse.

Furthermore, the verbalisations in the situation reflexively support and create the context by being constructed in relation to those relevant contextual features. Verbalisations, enact or realise particular contextual features making what is spoken of directly or indexed in the situation the relevant context. Thus the verbal enactment of the loudly shouted "ATTENN...SHUN" keys into a military discourse, and draws attention to, as it were, certain non-verbal features of the situation. (Although one might need to propose a dialectical relationship here).

It is clear from these that certain 'context of situation' will come to have the sense of a more general social type - a kind of situational typicality. Particular forms of discourse create particular positions of intelligibility that allows 'contexts of situations' to be seen and made meaningful ways. Those discourses also create the grounds for types of articulation that tend to re-enact particular types

of context. Thus, it is possible to begin to connect up the creation of meaning at the level of verbalisation to areas of discourse, to institution and on to the social system generally.

The relations in the syntagm represent a series of options from the numerous possibles, and always against a paradigmatic background or environment of relations that could have been there but were not. In view of what has just been outlined, it may be stated that particular meaning options realise an aspect of social system (and ultimately - ideology). It is the place of rhetoric to make these options appear as the natural, obvious, even the only ones possible. Structure can also be viewed in the same way; as a form of representation of syntagmatic relations. In other words structure is the outcome of any pathway of options through a system of paradigmatic relations. Certainly structure cannot be seen, from within this perspective, as a formal, static and determining arrangement outside the bounds of discourse. Organisation structures cannot be viewed in the tradition of Pugh et al (1968:1969), Child (1972); Blau and Schoenherr (1971) and others as organisational frameworks of formal roles and procedures and dimensions of authority that are conceived as existing as a configuration of states or activities that are enduring and persistent; as a patterned regularity that is preformed and determining. The view expressed here has more in common with that view of organisation structure initially articulated by Bittner (1965) and developed by Silverman (1970) and other ethnomethodological treatments (for a consideration of some of these approaches to organisation structure see Ranson et al 1980).

We arrive at a distinctive point in the excursus now. From a consideration of the post-structuralist conception of meaning we have seen how they posit a 'textual', 'written' (in the extended sense) nature of language. The 'in principle' impossibility of closing meaning. They deny:

(i) the possibility of locating a fixed, final and absolute meaning.

(ii) that there is a locus that can act as a point of origin and as guarantor of meaning. Be it the author/speaker, the author's intention or some other more or less metaphysical source.

(iii) that meaning can be fixed and held by an imposed meta-language. Meta-languages are antithetical to the notion of languages natural productivity, its plurality and tendency to proliferate meaning. They do violence to the textual. This includes the formal versions of structuralism that impose a static structure that operates to confine meaning.

They emphasise process. Meaning is process - is emergent. Structuration is preferred to structure.

From another direction, although there is much in the ethnomethodological programme that is confused, confusing and divisive, what they have achieved by focusing on everyday language use, is to make clear that part of <u>everyday</u> interactional activities, <u>are</u> attempts to control meaning, to close meaning. From their perspective that is not a manipulative, strategic affair necessarily but is the inevitable result of the use of indexical expressions and is accomplished by mundane interactional work. The general point here though is that social interaction is characterised by movements to close meaning - to present one's utterances as final, absolute, transparent - or at least adequate for the practical purposes at hand. In practical social affairs meanings are not pursued through to the textual but are only pursued to a presupposed originary point

that all, at least tacitly, agree is as far as one can go, and which is adequate to validate meaning.

The crucial nexus of this thesis, perhaps, lies at a derived confluence, then, between the abstract theories of meaning developed by the post-structuralists and the pragmatic aspects of meaning disclosed by the ethnomethodological programme. However, at the same time I would seek to escape any fixity or allegiance implied by the application of such (sub-) disciplinary labels.

THE SOCIAL CRITIC

Some Reflections on a New Research Practice

> "Hearing what people mean rather than what they say, involves a use of sociological imagination that lies close to skills in literary criticism."
>
> (Robert Moore 1977)

As Moore intimates, taking the injunction to study social phenomena in a way that is adequate at the level of meaning has some implications for research practice. In this section I want to present some reflections on that practice in the light of the post-structuralist theory of meaning and other related material presented thus far.

I want to suggest that research activity under these auspices is a critical practice. I want to refer to that practice as social criticism and refer to the person engaged in that activity as a social critic.

If this thesis sets out to uncover the meaning of 'participation', even within the confines of the research site, it will fail. Surveys and even participant observation studies may frequently aspire to divulge to a waiting audience, what 'such and such' means to a group of people under scrutiny. I, too, possessed such aspirations originally. However, such a meaning is a veritable Philosopher's Stone; much sought after but forever elusive.

It is not incidental that the Alchemist's Philosopher's Stone is an instrument of transformation; transmogrification even. To assert the discovery of a meaning, to create a mould to fix the phenomena in a stable, coherent, unified form is to transform the phenomena. Like a photograph, a fixed structured meaning is something other than that which it pretends to represent. Quite apart from a photograph being simply not the object(s) photographed, it has done something to the event/phenomena it is an image of. A photograph is firstly a piece of glistening card, an object in its own right; altogether a different entity from that which it represents. But further, a photograph has 'stilled' the phenomena, it has caught it and fixed it. It has removed it from its natural playground, its surroundings and its sequences. A photograph interrupts the processes of which the phenomena was a natural part.

David Hockney, in all seriousness, maintains that his paintings of swimmers and divers in a swimming-pool are more real(istic) than any photograph of the same event. It is his claim that his canvas is better able to convey the sense of movement, the temporal dimension; the process, if you like, of the diving/swimming event, than any photograph can. A photograph, alters the original phenomena by placing it in a 'still' 'frame'. Its relations of difference become then, not those of its natural surroundings and syntagmatic relations, in situ, but, possibly, its relationship to other photographs, or to

other images beyond and away from the original scene of the activity. This is especially so for those seeing the photograph who were not present at its taking.

These peculiar qualities of photographs (see Barthes 1977 & 1982) have some similarities with the framing of meaning that results from many traditional sociological methods. The survey profile, the formalities of structuralism, seek to capture the phenomena and to hold it still. This is not to say, of course, that a photograph is a mere dead image of a living phenomena. A photograph is capable of generating an hallucinatory degree of significant associations and feelings. But it does this more (or as much) in its relationships to other images and things as a photograph qua photograph, rather than by the relationships of the original phenomena to anything.

A critical practice here, does not seek to discover the meaning of the phenomena. In this instance this thesis does not seek to uncover the meaning of participation. Such a strategy is covertly, hermeneutically interpretive, it assumes that a meaning exists, that the meaning has always been there; a secret, hidden thing awaiting the illumination of the archaeologists torch. The meaning(s) are not complete objects, approachable by the analyst, to be stared at, of a piece, from a distance and then transposed intact to the page of a report. The meaning(s) thus presented are scaffolded and encased to attempt to preserve them as the only single, discoverable meaning. Such an assertion is bolstered by assorted academic paraphenalia including the inclusion of the item into the disciplines meta-language. Here, a critical practice denies this attribution of absolute meaning, of a final signified.

However, it is precisely this phenomena of attempted closure that might be considered as that of greatest interest to the social

critic. But not the closure attempted by academics, rather that attempted in everyday discourse. Such discourse is habitually characterised by attempts at closure, of presenting interpretations and definitions of the situation as final and authoritative, as a credible fixing and ordering of reality. It is this practice that should itself be of critical interest and it would be a myopic critical practice that, in observing that process, engaged in it itself.

As social critic I would not want, then, to launder the data, in the sense that I will not search for, and present to the reader, a unitary meaning or series of collated and structured meanings. Nor will I invent a source and locate it in the text as a means of guaranteeing the veridicality of the meanings, as an auditor of the origin and correctness of the meanings. I will not try to engage in remedial work that seeks to paper over the inconsistencies, omissions and contradictions in the articulations of members; rather the opposite, I will take them as the exclusive and rightful property of the text (the full notion of text will be elaborated subsequently), I would want to search them out and reveal them in their glorious nakedness. But in so doing a corrolary would be that the actual participant's attempts to elide those features of text, their own attempts to provide a smooth surface, would be exposed. Everyday attempts to close off meaning - to present coherence, order, unitary meaning, reason and naturalness should be drawn attention to - and the ultimate failure, in principle, and partial success in practice, of such attempts, highlighted.

The social critics job is to confront this process of closure, to reveal its processes and strategies. It's job is to locate those points to which meaning is pursued - that are accepted as final and as guarantor of meaning. It's job, is to locate the contradictions and omissions in those processes, the point where the positing of a source

undercuts itself and reveals the true ideological/metaphysical nature of the search and guarantee. It's job is to re-reveal that which is repressed; what, in the 'closure' of meaning is being 'cast off-limits'. What alternatives have been by-passed or repressed, and how that is achieved.

Traditional (sociological)methodology recuperates the data - 'messy'data is dispelled or in other ways transformed into a manageable state. Order is paramount. Good sense is synonymous with good order. The data is treated to an ordering process that transforms it from a whirling contradictory jumble of experiences, events, half-articulated designs, justifications, accounts of repair, etcetera, into a rational, categorizable, ordered unit - stable in place and time, self-consistent, amenable to comparison.

Traditional sociological methods, like traditional literary criticism seeks unity, coherence - it seeks to iron out, repair, explain deficiencies in the phenomena or in the data. It smoothes out contradictions; it seeks closure on meaning. It transcodes the data into its own discourse - into its own pre-formed code. It becomes an accomplice of ideology.

A social critical practice, in recognising the naturalness of contradiction in narrative and in everyday discourse seeks to display it. Partly for what they reveal about the ideological underpinning of such discourse. The point at which a discourse contradicts itself, the point to which it pushes back its search for a guarantee of meaning - displays what is accepted in that discourse as the root and source of meaning. It is at that point that the discourse is seen to rely upon some presupposed and presumed shared ideology or episteme that is seen as natural and immutable (at least in that instance).

Organisation members (especially those with an interest in

defining the situation in particular ways) will attempt to create a coherent and internally consistent realm of discourse in relation to participation, to incorporate it into the more habitual mode of company discourse in intelligible and consistent ways. A social critic might expect to find that in spite of these efforts, incoherences, absences and transgressions will be exposed; these, and the attempt to mask them in rhetoric, will, in turn, reveal the inability of the language of ideology to create coherence. Their discourse can be expected not to provide a unity of meaning but a multiplicity - a bodged assemblage of incompatible elements hastily papered over. The multiplicity of meanings if released, interrupts the alleged coherence in the espoused discourse. Within the discourse then, are implicit points where the reliance on ideology surfaces and where its facility to mask its own enterprise fails. Traditional and familiar values and epistemes, embodied in the ideology are made to surface and, at points, seen to be in collision with the espoused values of participation. The social critic is in the position of highlighting these points and displaying how the discourse contains within itself an implicit critique of its own values and practice.

Perhaps the ethnomethodologists programme begins to fall down where it fails to make the link between 'interpretive practices' and ideology. A point at which Althusser's definition of ideology perhaps enters. The notion that ideology is that which makes relations appear natural and certain ways of ordering are taken-for-granted is perhaps present but not explicit in Garfinkel. Barthes notion that ideology is that which makes the arbitrary and conventional appear natural is clearly relevant here. As would Foucault's useful linking of discourse to the struggle for power and the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

Ethnomethodologists sometimes verge on expounding 'routine practices' etcetera as derived from some universal structures of the mind (c.f. G. Bateson 1972).. They sometimes at the limits of their programme, swerve towards the metaphysical. To stem this tide, whilst retaining their significant machinations, the link with an expressed and expressable ideological base is perhaps important. But an ideology in the sense implied by the three mentioned above. These issues of ideology and power will be returned to much later.

A social critical practice should decry the delivery of a single unitary meaning. It should seek to discover and display the plurality of meanings inherent in the discourse (and in its own text, as it delivers itself - a practice requiring a constant reflexive activity). With the acceptance of notions like 'writing', 'textuality' and 'plurality' the idea of deciphering a text, of submitting it to a hermeneutic interpretation becomes somewhat redundant. It is, rather, more like a process of the multiplicity being 'disentangled', and also, as Derrida (1977) has it, a 'desedimentation' of elided and repressed meanings.

A simple sense of plurality is realised on the assumption that the meaning of a linguistic item (sentence say) varies from one (political) discourse to another. To the extent that the speaker/ hearer participates in these discourses or is familiar with them, then he will be able to locate one or more possible readings.

The social critic is not, like the purely textual critic, interested solely in splitting apart or desedimenting latent meanings, but, with the ethnomethodologists he is interested in showing how something means; with the way particular meanings are constructed and put forward as the meaning. Meanings are closed off and the processes by which this is accomplished or attempted are important to the social critic.

Words and sentences are intelligible within specific discourses - these discourses have more or less self-enclosed systems of relations of differences. Words within specific discourses (codes?) accrue meaning by entering habitual relations of difference. Those habitual relations will be ideologically informed. Words or sentences are located within specific discourses which thereby provide positions of intelligibility.

Traditional sociological methods ignore, suppress, or by-pass the actual productive process. As the labour and material involved in the productive process is suppressed - as the productive process of meaning in text is suppressed - so the processes by which meaning is produced-constructed in everyday discourse is suppressed. The meaning of a text is taken-for-granted, it is seen as a more or less natural (if enlightened) reflection, representation of something else - of a real world or as an expression of the author's subjectivity. So, everyday discourse is seen as the more or less effective communication of facets of shared reality from one individual to another. The meaning is not seen as actively constructed in the process but passively transmitted and received. The processes of the production of meaning are eschewed in favour of content and effect.

Traditional sociology's interpretation and presentation of its own texts is not seen as itself a productive process. Rather it concurs with the ideals of objectivity in which the 'facts' of reality are represented to the reader. By effacing the productivity of their own text traditional sociology continues that movement in which its view of the world is presented as natural - and ultimately correct and good. They come to place themselves in the position of our oracles - the providers of, indeed, reality itself.

Traditional sociology texts deny productivity of meaning by a

positioning of the reader. The text itself is not presented as a site of productivity but as a closed, competent statement. The position of intelligibility for the reader is one of passive receiver of provided wisdom. He can only reject or accept the 'facts' as presented, there is no encouragement to create fresh meaning in the text. Meaning is closed-off - presented as unitary, ordered and final.

A social critical practice should be alive to the presence of possible plurality in its own texts, indeed, revel in them. It should not try and constrain the reader to one position of intelligibility. But a social critical practice should also recognise the realisation and imposition of 'obvious' positions of intelligibility in actual everyday discourse - and, of course, be aware of the ideological imperative and means of achieving that. Speakers will attempt to create fixed positions of intelligibility for their audiences. What these positions are and how they are achieved/imposed should be of interest to the social critic. Speakers will attempt to present themselves as authoritative transmitters of unambiguous sense. They will attempt to position the audience to accept their message passively as real and correct - as <u>the</u> meaning - not allowing too much equivocation.

Such positioning practices are clearly associated with, and a reflection of existing ideological and power arrangements apparent in the language community. Such positioning serves to encamp the hearer in specific positions of intelligibility and to accept these positions as natural and obvious. The strategy operates reflexively since the given/adopted position of intelligibility offers the possibility of renewed recognition (misrecognition) of that which the person already knows. The positioning of the subject allows/forces an acceptance of, and a perspective on, the spoken in ways that are already wholly familiar and known. The positioning of the subject caters for a means

of intelligibility and the obvious achievement of intelligibility reinforces the correctness of the positioning. The position given/adopted provides access to the discourse in which the myths and signifying systems are allowed to re-present experience in ways that it is conventionally articulated in society (or in that language community).

Social critic should explore these positioning practices. Should question the 'obvious' positions of intelligibility presented. Should, indeed, question his own positions of intelligibility and make them manifold rather than unitary. The social critic should actively seek out the processes of the production of the text: and the organisation of its various discourses which constitute the text - and the strategies by which it smoothes over the incoherences and contradictions of the ideology suscribed in it.

The plurality of language - when recognised and accepted - offers the possibility of change - or, at least, a way beyond the tyranny of closed and unitary meanings. The liberatory effects of rejecting consigned positions and of being aware of alternative positions of intelligibility need not be overstated here.

For Macherey (1978) it is the lack in the work - its silence, what it is unable or will not say - that constitutes the evidence of its reverse side; a contrary project threatening and undermining the espoused project. But to assert that the task of the social critic is to expose the unspoken in the text is to gloss some huge methodological difficulties. However, not to attempt to recognise and identify the repressed in the text - its silence that finally confronts its own ideological project - is, perhaps, to collude with that ideological framework, to participate in the same repressions, taken-for-granteds and silences.

It is the same problem of reflexivity encountered earlier. To the extent that the social critic is able to break that reflexive regression he is able to say something new, to the extent that he remains in a self-confirming reflexive system,he is only able to re-say something, to repeat the familiar.

In this regard a truly critical practice is an activity - it is a productive process itself. Perhaps we need to recognise that a critical practice will transform, by releasing 'more' than was said. So it is not merely a process of recognition, of 'pointing out' but the creation of a relationship with its audience that produces a site of productivity, that allows the reader to actively and interrogatively engage the critics'text and release further meaning(s). There is a ceaseless flow of productive activity resulting from the ineluctable and unconstrainable (even by the critic) play of language.

The speaking participant actively produces utterances that are released to the public and are themselves the site of a productivity. The relationship between speaker and hearers constitutes an interactive process in which meaning can emerge - although is not immutably fixed. That dynamic relationship is the site of further activity - the possibility of the further play of language. Another relationship is formed between that and the researcher. The researcher forms an interactive relationship with the emergent meanings of the relationships of participants. That, too, is an interactive process - an activity not a passive re-presentation. At the simplest level - the researcher interacts with his data (which bears a more or less analogous resemblance to a text) and meanings are again emergent. The researcher actively seeks to produce a text that he then releases to the public. A fresh relationship is engendered between the text of the researcher and the reader. This should once again be a productive activity. The text of the researcher should itself be the

site of productive activity. The reader interacts with the text and meanings are emergent.

The movement should not involve a transformation of the meanings of the first relationship by closure or by meta-language that structures and fixes the meanings in a supposed absolute fashion. The social critic should demonstrate the processes by which meanings in the first relationship emerged. He should further preserve the multiplicity of meanings inherent in that relationship and in his interaction with it, and allow his readers to explore those meanings.

The methodological question - 'what is lost in that movement?' - is misdirected: the question is 'what is created - what is possible?' The methodological question is - how is that movement accomplished?

For Barthes, and others, the focus is not on the mode of production of the author. For Barthes, how Balzac went about producing Sarrasine (see "S/Z" 1974) is now largely irrelevant(why? - not discoverable - not relevant to the emergence of meaning in relation to that text). The focus is entirely on the critical practice; on the relationship between the reader/critic and the text - on the production of meaning by the work of reading the text. The text constitutes a raw material to be transformed by the critic. The speaker-hearer relationship (of participants) is not present - although the text is considered in terms of a series of competing discourses. (At a more banal level there are the interactive, if fictive, relationships of characters and of narrator to character.) The concern is with the productivity of the text itself. In some treatments - most spectacularly in Derrida's "Glas" (1974) say - the emphasis is more proactive, with significant focus being on the critics productive relationships with the reader via the text. The critics text here is a construction with an eye already to the active productive relationship between that text and its readers. Such texts overtly stylish, overtly plural in meanings correspond to Barthes 'writerly texts'.

For the ethnomethodologists qua sociologists the focus is more explicitly on the mode of production of meaning embodied in the first relationship. Like the symbolic interactionists, the concern is with the emergence of meaning in the interaction between speaker and hearer (as participants). The ethnomethodologists shift focus, one might say, from content to form. That is to say, to a greater degree they are concerned with the 'how' something means; rather than 'what' something means. They are more overtly concerned then with the actual processes, strategies etc. of the production of meaning. The routine activities by which meaning is accomplished in the speaker-hearer relationship of participants.

Ethnomethodologists are not unaware of the active process and the transformation of meaning embodied in the relationship between the interactive process of participants and the researcher himself. They are aware, generally speaking, that the researcher enters the productive process, that meanings emerge from his involvement in the data and are not 'cleanly' and transparently re-presented untrammeled by his presence.

They do appear more blind, or less interested, in the productive process of their own texts and the active relationship between their texts and the readers of that text. Although clearly Blum et al's 'On Beginning Social Inquiry' are an exception to this. And it must be said that the opacity of 'Garfinkel-speak' is perhaps a recognition (if unconscious) of the importance of this phase of the movement. Much of the language of ethnomethodology is self-consciously esoteric, frustratingly original - a serial of fresh connections that partially forces fresh readings and the emergence of fresh meanings.

Such an overtly self-reflexive practice as that of, say, Derrida

in "Glas", will not, despite a recognition of its merits, be engaged in here. It is a dangerous exercise, open to massive misinterpretation and too often perceivable as verging on the meaningless. The practical purposes of this text, its expected discursive mode, its relevant audiences leads me to eschew such a practice.

To a degree, all texts cease to be merely textual when they enter the public realm. They become, in a sense, suasive; they are expected or made to perform something. They are not taken as purely self-reflexive and productive exercises.

There is, as de Man (1973) notes, an inevitable discrepancy between reason and rhetoric endemic to all texts. That is also inherent in any critical practice when it passes from mere explication to theory and self-conscious method.

Texts always generate a history of partial or 'aberrant' readings - the blind spots of which can be deconstructed, but never so completely demystified as to bring criticism out on a level of perfect clarity and truth. A critical text is itself always a partial reading - is itself likely to have its own blind spots (contextualisation of meaning being perhaps one in this text). At these points where it is suasive and presents a view, it will itself be rhetorical and therefore available for deconstruction. The productive process is not brought to a closure by the provision of a critical text, no matter how sophisticated. It is perhaps noteworthy to recognise the etymological and punning connection between 'criticism' - and - 'crisis'. (Criticism as an adversorial or oppositional activity?)

At its extreme (most radical) (with Foucault and Derrida) a critical practice is concerned with revealing the invisible in the text. In this regard the critic presents a challenge to culture and its apparently sovereign powers of intellectual activity - which we may call 'system' or 'method' - especially when dealing with texts

whose powers aspire to the condition of science - with its connotations of closure, finality, truth. In other words (social) criticism should seek to challenge these circles of reflexive thinking and discourse that reaffirm ideology and familiar ways of knowing - that lead us comfortably to say 'Ah yes, I recognise that - that is the case'. Such a critical practice will always dangerously approach absurdity and meaninglessness. The necessity to break the habitual and familiar relations of signifier-signified, entails a releasing of signifier that then provides the possibility of fresh meanings that, by their very lack of familiarity will appear absurd and unacceptable. This is a Nietzschean project, and explains his conflating of philosophical and poetic discourse. It also goes some way towards explaining the 'strangeness' of the language of ethnomethodology. It is a self-conscious project in the texts of Foucault and Derrida. A practice, for these purposes here, that I am frightened of.

PART II

PRELIMINARY POSTURES

INTRODUCTION

This introduces those sections of the thesis in which the data is presented. It stands firstly as a case study, a longitudinal analysis of the attempt by one company to introduce an industrial participation scheme and is thereby a contribution to that body of literature that treats of participation as a substantive topic of study. But at the same time, the sections in this Part and in Parts III and IV to follow, begins to work with the theoretical conceptions already outlined and which continue to develop.

As already indicated, the thesis retains its own sense of development. Thus, the theoretical developments that took place in the research activity are reflected in the progression of the data through its presentation here. In Parts II - IV there is a movement from a position where the data is foregrounded and presented more or less descriptively through stages in which the analysis and theoretical considerations begin to foreground themselves. Parts V and VI see something of a reversal with theoretical considerations foregrounded and the data is used illustratively or stands, in its already presented form as a background for these theoretical elaborations.

The data and theoretical conceptualisations were in constant dialectical relationship throughout the research activity and the sense of that is, to a degree at least, retained here. It is a relationship that engenders a dynamic tension; one that is not totally resolved in the text and is perhaps a necessary and continually productive tension that should remain undecidable.

The data sections also serve to offer to the reader the text as generated at the place of research (although clearly not in a pure form innocent of my own working of it). To that extent it is available

to the reader for comparison with my own analysis and as the ground upon which the reader can himself engage that text and discover his own 'reading'. That activity, and the inherent tension between the presented data and the theoretical working, also offers up to the reader the opportunity to engage my own text interrogatively and enter into a productive deconstruction of it.

CHAPTER I

TRIDY DRUGS INC.
Some Novel and Non-Novel Features of a Research Setting

Most of the material to which this thesis refers stems from my involvement with one manufacturing site over a period of just under two years. Contact with the company was close throughout that period, frequently on a weekly basis but never less than a once a month visit. The longitudinal aspect of the contact is significant, although, as one might expect, partiality is still an unavoidable outcome. The stories, I, or anyone would relate about that site over that time (or any time) are incomplete and I make no apologies for not attempting to present a comprehensive and ordered narrative.

However, as an habitual reader you will doubtlessly be seeking orientations of time and place. Talk of a 'site' fosters an expectation of description and visual imagery. I will not totally thwart those expectations. The reader should be aware, however, that as well as those fictions necessitated by the traditional honouring of confidentiality, other 'fictions' (or the modern word 'factions' may be applicable) may invade the text. I would like the reader to consider the possible fictive status of any reportage, and particularly any critical reportage. 'Fictions' engendered by necessary spatio-temporal partialities, by writer-reader biases, by an ideologically rooted language (that we may or may not share) for instance.

Firstly, there is nothing outstandingly different about the company in which the 'fieldwork' took place. Although it was certainly unique. There is nothing superficially outstanding about the people involved. Although they are certainly unique individuals.

This is probably the most sensible thing that can be said about the similarity or difference of this company and its people to others. I exploit an assumption of a certain shared familiarity of British industrial life when I say that the company is a reasonably normal and ordinary medium-sized, private-sector manufacturing site located in the provinces. The workforce are a fairly normal (mostly) white caucasian British workforce; female and male mix, skilled - unskilled mix. In other words various demographic measures would undoubtedly reveal typical profiles - 'typicality' being a feature of quantitaire analysis. I can say 'undoubtedly' because of a comfortable familiarity and knowledge of the society in which I live. This is quite clearly then, not a comparative study in any rigorous sense. Any comparisons depend upon weighing up certain of my descriptions with your own experience of industrial settings.

There are two facts pertaining to the company that act as certain dimensions of differentiation. In the first instance the company is part of a multinational corporation with an American base. This American connection has a certain significance as I endeavour to illustrate subsequently. Secondly, the particular manufacturing site with which I was involved was non-unionised. This too has important implications that unravel as we proceed.

I shall refer to the company in its U.K. operations as Tridy Drugs Industries taken to be part of a wider operation known as Tridy Drugs International. The huge corporation based in the mid-west, U.S.A. can then be termed Tridy Industries and Co. Inc. Its massive international production and marketing operations are engaged in the manufacture and selling of pharmaceuticals and agricultural chemicals, although through its major subsidiary Nouella Nace it has diversified slightly into cosmetics and related health and beauty products. The company in all its guises is extremely

profitable and its future is well secured.

Its U.K. operations consists of a Head Office situated in London, a research and development site, and two manufacturing bases, one based in the North of England, the other (with which I am concerned) based in the South East. The site in the South East (shall we call it Pencham) also had significant marketing interests. Each site had a reasonable degree of operational autonomy largely working within a budgetry corporate plan although major decisions were referred to London H.Q. and ultimately to the U.S.A.

Pencham manufactured compound and capsule medications. It produced its own plastic capsules on site, for its own use and for use elsewhere. It also had its own packaging, labelling and distribution facilities in site. So, a fairly comprehensive, self-contained enterprise functionally; although politically it was 'open' in that in terms of major decisions there were hierarchies of responsibility extending from the site to London and on to the United States. Most of its commercial, engineering, quality-control and scheduling services were also incorporated at the same site; together with the marketing operations already alluded to. At the Pencham site the company employs a figure somewhat in excess of five hundred people with a division between female and male staff being nearly on a par. A general organisation chart can be located in the appendix (1).

The company paid good wages and salaries, generally a little higher than the average for the area. It was said to have a good reputation in the area. Its labour turnover and formal industrial relations record can fairly be said to have been very satisfactory. As one might expect in the pharmaceutical industry some of the working conditions were not physically pleasant and engendered an element of danger. Safety precautions entailed a variety of awkward and

time-consuming practices. Certain operators were required to change clothes every time they left and re-entered the production area. They were also required to shower: 'The cleanest workers in the country' as one operative put it. Special clothing and other protective apparatus were required in a number of areas. For all this the general conditions at the site were good; clean, light, with a range of facilities. The company expended some effort to ensure that plant was relatively modern and efficient and the conditions of work and peripheral facilities maintained at a reasonable standard given the nature of the manufacturing process.

The work overall the site is, of course, extremely varied, however, in the manufacturing areas much is simple and routine amounting to little more than 'machine minding'. People are often re-allocated tasks for production efficiency, but the nature of the task remains more or less the same. Payment for the operators is on a weekly non-bonus system based on a fairly complex grading scheme using certain job evaluation principles.

The seeds of the project with which I was to become involved began to germinate more than two years before my first contact at Pencham. The seeds may have been planted in the minds of certain influential figures even some time before that. The project continued after I withdrew from the site and as far as I know is still developing. So despite spending nearly two years involved, I am unable to present anything like a complete documentation of a project.

The genesis of the project possesses a certain obscurity; an obscurity fostered further by certain interested parties; but obscure also because of my late involvement. One plausible story of the genesis might run thus. The company's U.K. interests are (were) presided over in part by a senior Operations Group based at the London Head Office. Two to three years prior to point X (the time of

my entry) that group, in the course of its continuing discussions of overall direction and policy were engaged in identifying and seeking to pre-empt certain problem areas. At about the same moment, interest in the issues of industrial democracy and worker participation were exercising various imaginations and given an apparent tangible relevance by the imminence of the Bullock Report. (This was in the mid-1970's when the E.E.C., the Labour Party, the T.U.C. and others were considering legislating for participation. Then in 1975 the Bullock Commission on Industrial Democracy was established.) Those interested would recall the scurrying debate carried out in all quarters, industrial, political, academic at that time. Every issue of 'Management Today' and 'Personnel Management' resounded to the rhetoric of the participation discourse. The Operations Group were, of course, 'on the ball' and aware of the issues. There was some concern then, that legislation was to follow that would foist some form of work place democracy on the company that would potentially wrestle their control over company structure from their hands. The recent Industry Bill with its clauses on disclosure of information had already precipitated a degree of alarm. It should be remembered here that the site was at that point non-unionised and as far as the American warlords were concerned should remain so. Since much of the debate concerned whether any participation scheme should only operate through existing trade union machinery or not, there was a degree of concern that events might override the company's strategies and they would find themselves unionised and with a participative scheme to boot.

It would be misleading to suppose simply that the array of circumstances described above were directly causative of the company embarking on the establishment of a participation scheme. Other forces were also at work, but the coincidence of detail should be

born in mind. However, soon after, a report was generated by the Personnel Department that provided a rationale for instigating an 'experiment' in 'worker involvement'. The two expressions are important and deliberate.

The tale has a peculiar twist to it. Serving on the Operations Group at that time was an academic consultant, a Professor of Management Development from one of our best universities. He had already, earlier in his career, served the company as one of its senior managers for an area of European operations, so knew the company well enough. As an academic the participation debate had a lively appeal and the opportunity of field work on the topic would clearly have been most fortuitous. The genesis of the project must owe something to the instrumental involvement of that person. (And avowedly does on his own admission.)

It must be born in mind that the company's involvement in participation was not a consuming priority. It was one of a number of potential problem areas identified that as 'a forward thinking company' became crystalised into some form of action (given some added impetus by certain vested interests.) The Pencham site emerged as the logical place for the experiment. The company management clearly had in their contingency plans at that time the thought that the site was sufficiently isolated and autonomous for the exercise not to infringe on other areas. Should the experiment fail or get out of hand it could be contained at Pencham and not taint other sites.

Having made a commitment and chosen a potential site discussions with senior management at Pencham got under way. This was at a point something under two years before my arrival (I will use the notation x-2: x being my point of entry.) There is a culture of obedience and 'towing the company line' pervading the management

structure. Whilst some managers at Pencham were clearly aware of the question of participation, it was fairly obvious that they had not given any real thought to implementing any formal scheme at Pencham. Initial reactions were fairly mixed, but it was clearly not the case that participation was perceived as a righteous panacea that they had all been waiting for. Some expressed anxieties of various kinds; some suggesting participation would provide a platform for the entry of trade unionism; others that the whole thing was gobbledygook and would seem only to unsettle an existing smooth operation; others that the site already exhibited a tolerable degree of participation. Others kept quiet. Still others appeared wholly and genuinely apathetic. In any case, participation would only be considered secondary to more pressing considerations of production schedules and operational efficiency and other day-to-day managerial preoccupations. There is always a danger when one's research focuses on, and energised by one aspect of an organisation's activities, of assuring that it occupies the participants time and thinking as much as it does ones own. Whilst with the participants, participation may be the major preoccupation, but one sometimes forgets that when one leaves they get on with other, often more pressing, matters.

Aware, no doubt, of their duties, obligations and own best interests, the senior management at Pencham agreed to go ahead with the exercise. In effect the commitment and instructions of Head Office presented them with something of a fait accomplis in which they could do little other than acquiesce. It is a recurring paradox of participation that almost invariably its initiation is characterised by dictate and unilateralism. Besides it was only an 'experiment', with the promise of reversion to established procedures.

This rather glosses the fact that early debates were vigorous; but more of that later. A full-scale rebellion never seemed likely

Given the power-games involved, that something would happen took on an air of inevitability. Those early debates, however, clearly had some input into the early emerging definitions of participation. Parameters were already being tested out, claims stated.

The academic consultants and the management were committed, both pragmatically and to some degree theoretically to a gradualist approach. There was some adherence to an evolutionary model of change on the part of the academics. For management, the status of the project as an 'experiment' entailed its smallness of scale and containability. For many of the same reasons that Pencham was chosen in the first place, a particular section of the site was chosen in which to begin the experiment. The section chosen was the Chemical Plant. It was here that the raw chemicals were mixed and prepared in various reaction vessels to produce the fine dry powder that forms the basic constituent of most of the pills manufactured on site. The Plant employed sixteen process operators who worked in four shift groups. The remaining staff consisted of shift supervisors, a section head, a plant manager and three auxiliary service personnel. The plant, then, had the advantage of being relatively small. It also had the advantage of being physically isolated from the remainder of the factory. Its processes were relatively self-contained and autonomous, and its operations fairly settled.

A Steering Committee was established to oversee the project; to invest responsibility for the direction and monitoring of the project with company members. The academic consultants felt it important that initiative and control of the project should come from the company rather than from themselves. They were keen to avoid the imposition of a blue-print package and wanted the format of the scheme to emerge under the auspices of those involved. The

Steering Committee was constituted solely of managerial personnel and included the Managing Director, the Production Director, the Personnel Manager and the two academic consultants. There was also the sense, given the original imposition of the idea from head office, that those on the site with a stake in the project should assume authority and responsibility. The project should become their project and not that of the people in London. Two comments from a company report of some of these early discussions dated 10th March x-2 illustrate these points. The academic consultant stressed the importance, the document reiterates, of:-

> "(b) checking back with the Steering Group at each stage of the operation. This would be fundamentally to maintain Company control of the project.
>
> (c) to stress that the Chemical Plant project was a pilot scheme and there was no commitment to continue in any other area after its completion."

The consultants then undertook to approach the staff of the Chemical Plant itself. After a briefing by a member of personnel however the shift operators reacted in an extremely unfavourable manner and refused to see the consultants. Some careful manoeuvring contact was established but the ensuing meeting was not encouraging. The operators were extremely sceptical and indicated that they doubted management's intentions and were not interested in taking part. Other groups, although less aggressive, were extremely apathetic and seemed unconcerned about the whole idea. Part of this was put down to an inadequate and misleading briefing by the

personnel department.

A certain degree of acrimony continued but eventually the consultants obtained a degree of agreement from the operatives that they could proceed, although this response was passive rather than enthusiastic. For various reasons that need not concern us here, the consultants were at that point, committed to the collection of quantifiable data from interview schedules. To that end they embarked on a round of interviews and questionnaire design and administration within the plant. The interviews centred on obtaining information relating to individuals perceptions of their rights and obligations with regard to what they did or could do and what decisions they made or could make (Bate & Mangham 1976). Collating this material a list of activity and decision items divided into twelve role zones was derived giving a total of sixty-three activity items and fifty-six decision items. An attitude scale was constructed and participants were requested to rate the degree to which they would like to be involved in each activity. Participants were also enjoined to indicate

(a) the degree of influence he would ideally like to have;
(b) the extent by which his influence would be limited by his present personal abilities; and
(c) the amount of influence he is presently allowed to have vis-a-vis those decision areas.

With the data collected, it was worked on by the consultants in preparation for various feedback sessions. These sessions with management groups were not an instigated success. The consultants report that management personnel were somewhat confused and wanted a complete analysis and diagnosis of the material. The consultants

suggested that they should be responsible for seeing the significance of the data and to explore alternative courses of action. The advice was taken. Subsequent discussions between management and consultants circled around the future direction of the project. Full details of the questionnaire and this phase of the project need not concern us here but can be located in Bate and Mangham (1976).

The most important structural outcome of this phase was the establishment of a 'working party' to consider a group of issues identified by the managerial group. The Chemical Plant operators were briefed and asked to submit nominations for representatives. The body was duly formed and was officially referred to as the Chemical Plant Working Party. The project in total was termed 'The Chemical Plant Worker Involvement Pilot Project' in company documentation. Again the words are significant and the implications of their choice will be explored later.

The project got under way with its first meeting of the Working Party in March x-1. Each shift elected one representative and similarly the supervisors elected one representative. Other members of the Working Party included the section head, the department manager, the Personnel Services Manager, the Managing Director together with the two academic consultants.

Meetings of the Working Party continued on a monthly basis. Very early on there were some suggestions of extending the project to other areas, but in fact no such move materialised for nearly eighteen months. At about x-9 months the Managing Director took part in a company conference with his counterparts from all over Europe and senior people from the U.S.A. Part of the discussions centred on the issue of employee participation. Pencham's Director's contribution was crucial and was very well received.

He reported that the conference made a vague commitment for all present to consider the potential of their own operations moving in a similar direction. Suitably encouraged and no doubt eased by this official sanctioning of the project the Managing Director returned to the site with fresh resolve. He called the Steering Committee together to explicitly discuss the extension of the exercise. He also made it clear that his intention was ultimately to see the scheme extended across the whole site.

Over the next few months the Personnel Manager, who had increasingly assumed responsibilities for direction of the project and was referred to in some circles as the 'internal change agent', prepared documents and proposals for the extension of the scheme. The scheme was rapidly being developed into a formal bureaucratic framework; a blueprint for participative administration that could be superimposed on existing organisational structures. The consultants were a little wary of the rapid formalisation and were now themselves in the position of urging a degree of caution and of trying to reintroduce the element of graduation that they had felt was important. They visualised an evolving system that could emerge from and be sensitive to the wishes, demands and arrangements of individual departments and particular interest groups. However, given the new enthusiasm and the fact that there was a move to concrete action, they were not disposed to significantly hamper events. A sort of compromise emerged. The consultants agreed in principle to the company's framework with its emphasis on a site wide multi-level participative structure but urged that things should proceed in stages.

Agreement was reached that the next step would involve establishing a new departmental Working Party. For various reasons

not vital here, the Packaging Department was opted for. Ideas for the projected extension were put before the Steering Committee and to the Chemical Plant Working Party for their consideration and approval. With this secured, arrangements were made for the staff of the Packaging Department to be approached and the ideas put before them. This is where I enter the scene.

CHAPTER 2

COMPANY DISCOURSE

Traditionalism

As already indicated there is nothing markedly unusual about this company. There are, of course, certain distinguishing features that mark it out in the British industrial scene; notably its American connection and the absence of trade unions. The sense of ordinariness should not be taken as a denial of the uniqueness of the company; rather I want to convey the sense that many of the attitudes, values and responses encountered there could happily be described as traditional and familiar to occupants of other British industrial sites. One might say, then, that there existed at Tridy a recognisable discourse or discursive environment in which work-talk was embedded. There was a mode of discourse, work patterning and general structural arrangements that could be found among many working populations in England, indeed in much of Western industrial society. Most notably there was a common and shared discursive practice that realised and readily reconfirmed the traditional divisions in the workplace, especially those between management and the shop-floor and with the rights and obligations that accompany them. It is perhaps here that the traditionalist attitude is most readily apparent. As one of the operatives put it most dramatically:

> "I don't see why I should have to come and argue with management; it's not my place to. I'm just an operator like the rest of them. I'm just an ordinary bloke. It's not my place to change the world ... I don't want to get involved personally."

This is an index of a common mode of discourse amongst the shop-floor, one that reaffirms a traditional discursive movement that supports management prerogative and duty and that denegrates the importance and responsibilities of the worker. Here is the proverbial worker

who goes to work only to perform his tasks and to receive his money - the archetypal seller of labour. It is at least partially assertive in that management are made responsible for affairs within the company.

> "If management set up these systems and they don't work - they should work them out...it's not my job...that's what they're paid for. They're supposed to be the bright blokes."

as another operative put it.

There are a number of important issues embodied in the above quotations, some of which will certainly require treatment later. For the moment, however, some salient points can be elucidated. Firstly, there is the conveyed sense of 'knowing one's place', of the recognition of a natural order of things. In this way 'it is management's role to manage'; that is both their right and their duty, and not to be encroached upon by shop-floor personnel. Responsibility is placed squarely on the shoulders of management. The renunciation of responsibility by the shop-floor is justified in one of two ways. Firstly, and not unusually, management personnel receive superior remuneration, largely for assuming that burden; and secondly, by virtue of their superior intelligence and wider capacities, and their 'specialness'(as opposed to 'ordinariness') they are naturally better suited. The inherent apathy implicit in the quote will be a recurring theme. It is largely a passive attitude; a denial of the will or the right, or the moral imperative to be assertive and to actively pursue change.

In response to being initially confronted with the notion 'participation' an operative had this to say:

> "We don't really see the point. We are here to work, they are paid to make decisions."

This expression was fairly typical of the shop-floor, the same type of point being made in different forms. The rhetoric has a certain force here. It may be characterised as part of the rhetoric of motives for shop-floor inactivity. However the view was far from

universal; indeed there is no such thing as a universal shop-floor attitude that can be neatly laid before the reader here. Some verbalisations by members of the shop-floor constitute a virtual contradiction of the view expressed here, as we shall see. However it was sufficiently widespread for the statement that the shop-floor 'collusively conferred responsibility on management' to have some significance. On some occasions there were irate expressions if it was held that management were showing signs of reneging on their assigned obligations:

> "We're taking it off them ... taking responsibility off them - those that should take responsibility."

And again in response to an issue about smoke breaks raised at a participation meeting:

> "A lot of people think it's management's problem. If they are concerned why don't they just say 'No smoke breaks'."
>
> "Pauline says that the girls have been asked to think of solutions (to the problem of smoke breaks) but that's management's job. They should either say there will be no smoke breaks .. or otherwise."

On another occasion an operative described to me how she felt she was able to 'twist her supervisor around her little finger' and get her own way, but declared, "It's wrong really; he should be able to make decisions." In some quarters the shop-floor seemed to reflect a view that decisions were not being made, that responsibilities were being neglected - this caused some consternation. There was a sense of fear attached to that impression. Some of that was attached to the perception of the company's increasing progressive style which entailed frequent changes in management style. There was a pervasive feeling of discontinuity and some times an expression of the fear that the normal, natural order was breaking down:

> "Someone's got to make decisions - why don't they just say 'so-and-so will decide'. I mean, it used to be Cecil, he said 'yes' or 'no' - he's done it for donkeys years. They don't seem to want to put decisions where they belong - with Chris and people like Cecil ... No one makes any decisions. Somebody has to."

The same person apportioned some of the blame for the burgeoning 'chaos' to the weakness of certain management personnel - a number of people gave voice to that opinion. The notion of weakness with the obvious corollary of the necessity for management to be 'strong' is clearly an extremely traditional, not to say old-fashioned conception. The implication is that management are expected to have the character to make the decisions that others are not capable of making - it is not only a practical obligation, it is almost a moral obligation, nay, a moral imperative.

A statement that captures the traditionalist ethos very well and which reveals people's adherence to established patterns of organisation and the fear of the collapse of any such settled order was made to me by a couple of middle-aged shop-floor workers:

> "It's wrong, it's a wrong style of management - this so-called progressive stuff - they don't know when to put their foot down. There are never any suspensions, people get away with things. They old values were better; people knew where they stood. We could do with a bit more of the old stick back."

Paternalism, Authoritarianism and Reformism

As one might suppose the management style of the company is far from unitary. There are confusing elements of the old and the new; of traditional and progressive. Each of the above 'isms' coexists within the company; they are identifiable dimensions of a mode of discourse that is taken to be indicative of 'management style'. Paternalism is an incidental aspect of company culture; clearly companies do not have formulated policies of paternalistic control, but there are various modes of interaction and work practices that

permit such a labelling. Authoritarianism, too, is a feature of interactional and linguistic style rather than declared policy, although historically it may have been consciously and overtly rooted in policy. Reformism represents a more deliberative, proactive move towards a more progressive style. The impetus for this stems from the very senior levels of management, and is resisted to a degree at lower levels.

The paternalistic stance is, in a sense, defined for me by one of the senior managers at Pencham:

> "When I first came here I thought it was very paternalistic - 'you do as we tell you and we'll look after you all right'."

He places the statement in the past tense, but this is perhaps attributable to his subsequent involvement in the progressive management discourse - he had become a member of the company 'in crowd'. But it is still interesting to note that a newcomer to the management group should categorise the company in this way, and I feel we must give a good deal of credence to his diagnosis.

There is a supposed caring attitude in the company, a rhetoric of concern. As already hinted, a lot of time and money had been spent to ensure that the physical working conditions are up to date and of a high standard; although there are strong legalistic and hygiene and safety considerations and obligations that were far from the back of people's minds. Wages, too, were very favourable in comparison for the market rates for the area. The company also had provision for subsidised meals, pension plans, retirement gifts, a cosy in-house newspaper; all the accoutrements of a civilised, caring company. Many of the shop-floor did recognise this and their talk is often marked by expressions of appreciation. As one operative put it: "The company looks after you quite well here anyway". The view was often proposed that despite everything (and

that "everything" we will get to shortly), the company was a good one to work for, it did take care of its employees, at least in a general way.

Paternalism is, of course, quite compatible with the traditionalist elements; indeed paternalism in some ways is an integral part of traditionalism. It reinforces the notion that responsibility resides within the domain of the accepted upper echelons. It further reinforces the collusion of the workforce with this assignment, and the concentration of power and responsibility. Not only is there a moral order that asserts that the shop-floor should not be involved in the tasks of decision-making and other types of proactive behaviour but, further, they have no need to, since the company, in any case, acts in their interests. Literally, the father has a natural and legal right to exercise his guardianship and discretion in relation to his charge. The child concurs with the arrangement quite naturally as a rule. The father can exercise his authority over the child as he pleases, that is part of his duty; but increasingly in modern society he must do so with due regard to the best interests of his charge. If a natural caring approach is not apparent, then external pressure can be exerted to protect the child's interests. It is interesting to speculate in relation to the above literal presentation, whether the company, like the modern father, needs to be mindful of the watching eye of external bodies who take responsibility to ensure that 'the caring society' is not a mere myth. Is the extension of paternalism into a more progressive mode merely a reflection of these changes in the broader discourse in society by which caring becomes a legal rather than (or, more charitably, as well as) an ethical observance? An attempt by the company to keep control in their hands and away from the prying interference of external bodies. We shall have cause to consider

this aspect a little later with regard to management's rhetoric of motivation in relation to participation generally.

Paternalism is one of the ways of ensuring the Organisational Development maxim that the individuals goals and aspirations should be placed in one-to-one correspondence with those of the company. It achieves this by making the assumption that the individual need not concern himself since the company naturally has his interests at heart. All that the individual need do is to fulfill certain working requirements and his interest will be met. By voluntary concurrence, the workforce completes the happy circle.

> "Most women are quite happy to be told what to do - to have the work set for them so that they can get on with it - they don't really want to get involved ... (But) ... it's good for them to be told what's going on."

(this is from a male section supervisor. He is not necessarily referring to women in general - it is just that his department had a 100% female staff).

Problems , of course, arise when that concurrence is not voluntarily given; the arrangement is then one-sided and in disarray. If it is not voluntary then some coercion may be required.

The language of labour management relations is also characterised by certain indications of authoritarianism. This is particularly the case with some of the older, longer service managers and section heads. Such managers are often at the ceiling of their careers, and too often tend to get divorced from the organizational elite responsible for the drive towards change and a more progressive outlook. They are, in a sense, out-of-tune with the contemporary climate of the organisation and remain entrenched in an old-fashioned discourse. They are not closely involved in those groups where the newer discourse is developed and traded in. Younger managers, still with career potential, tend to be more

attuned to the emerging styles, and are more readily appreciative of the degree of self-interest involved in being seen to accept them. Thus, at Tridy, a core of traditionalist, authoritarian line managers coexist in an often uneasy alliance with younger 'progressive' managers who are au fait with the changing approach. As a departmental manager told me:

> "I was traditionally trained, I can't really keep up with the new developments, unlike ..... and ..... (his two young section heads) who are not only keen on the changes in technology in the company but also changes in management style."

This manager (aged about 50) ran his department in, what verged on, an authoritarian fashion, but appeared to retain the respect of and a reasonable working relationship with the younger men. At his staff meetings with his senior staff which I attended, he tended to be very dominant, albeit in a fairly mellow way. Such behaviour was not lost on his subordinates:

> "He's very conservative really."
> "We have this expression - when we go to see ... (the manager) he has that 'I'm listening but I don't believe you' look; he just sits there with that smile on his face."

Part of the style involves ensuring that everything passes through him; he is the centre of all things within the department, directing and controlling. When his subordinates organised some ad hoc meetings to discuss their problems amongst themselves, he quickly put a stop to it - "He didn't like it at all; he went mad." When he subsequently established formal meetings after pressure from above as well as below, he had a tendency to place increasingly weak characters in the chair (the chairperson was drawn from his senior staff group, they chaired the subordinates meeting and then reported back to the senior staff meeting) ensuring that the shop-floor case would not be strongly represented at a senior level.

This at least was the description provided by the shop-floor and by some of the section supervisors themselves.

The general authoritarian approach was identified by members in a number of different areas.

> "There are a lot of older style authoritarian section heads, such as ..... he's an ex-army person - he runs his department like a military operation. But it is apparent that some members are happier with a strong leadership." (said by a department manager about his department supervisors).

Note again here the supposed collusion of the workforce.

> "It's a very old-fashioned style of management ... you feel like you're back at school" (Distribution Department operative)
>
> "He's a strong character - he's too strong for Chris (floor manager) I think he's too strong for Austen (department manager). He's a hard man." (Said by a supervisor about his section head and that person's relationship with his two immediate superiors).
>
> "We don't get threatening authoritarian managers that we had before - we don't get that now" (said by an operative from the chemical plant after he had been involved in a participation group for some time).
>
> "We had one over there who was a self-styled Hitler".

These remarks were made about managers and section heads in five different departments across the site and do not represent an exclusive and exhaustive set. Clearly individuals in the company are conversant with a manner of discourse that talks of manager-worker relations in ways that can usefully be characterised as authoritarian. Their language also suggests that some at least are aware of alternatives. To talk of something as 'old-fashioned' implies a knowledge of an alternative <u>newer</u> mode.

The juxtaposition of 'authoritarian' and 'progressive' styles was the cause of some disquiet. Both from some of the managers who experience a degree of dissonance: "I'd be authoritarian if I could but that's not the name of the game at the moment" (section head engineering) and from the shop floor; since comparison throws either

style into relief, and thereby more accessible to critical assessment. Some people, then, are aware of a transition or at least an instability and are in a position to question other people's and their own style. They are conscious of alternatives, and some are shrewd enough to monitor and utilise the imbalance, others find it unmanageable. Others just go blithely on:

> "I believe in discipline. I think they (the workforce) need to be disciplined ... softly disciplined" (section head - distribution).

The American Connection: Dynamism, Bureaucracy and the 'Greenbacks'.

In relation to the preceding section, it is clear that much of the impetus for the shift to a purportedly more progressive style stems from the thinking and ways of responding embodied in the discourse of the chiefs of the organisation based in the U.S.A. and the dissemination of that discourse throughout the corporate body. There are certain Americanisms that colour the tone of the place notwithstanding the presence, periodically, of actual American managerial staff, usually at a fairly high level. Other managers were often moved from site to site so that some would have experience in other corporate sites, some of them actually being sent to the States for a term. Perhaps the major factor attributable to the trans-Atlantic involvement is the non-unionisation of the plant; but I will consider that separately later.

The progressive spearhead that I have already alluded to, undoubtedly derives its impetus and direction from the U.S. Indeed, it was suggested that the desire to 'try out' participation itself had its roots in the corporation, and it was monitored (controlled?) with interest from there. There was a portion of the company discourse at Pencham that traded in the stereotyped Americana of

dynamism of rapid change, of being 'go ahead'. Talk at management level certainly reflected that and it was pervasive enough to be identified by the shop-floor:

> "The company's like that now ... they like to try out new methods and that. There's new ways of thinking and doing things. They are forever running courses and lectures and things."

The Behavioral Science Industry in the U.S. appears to be more impactful on managerial thinking than in Britain. There was a certain preoccupation with new management techniques and methods, with courses and so on. Part of the rhetoric that attempted to present the company as dynamic, modern and forward thinking.

In relation to the latter, it takes on a different edge when considered in relation to the Managing Director's assertion that one of the reasons for the introduction of a participation scheme was in order to be one step ahead of any possible government legislation concerning Industrial Democracy. Reformism in the light of that begins to look more like a rearguard action, attempting to preserve the autonomy and self-interest of the company rather than a concern for the interests of the employees. The changes and motives of senior management were viewed with some scepticism and cynicism by the shop-floor:

> "This company is always quick to pay lip-service to government thinking - are they paying lip-service to the government?"

Such a question is fairly astute given the views of the management as expressed by the Managing Director above, even if it is an over-simplification of the diversity and complexity of management's rhetoric of motives.

There is another feature of company culture that has a bearing on some of the issues that will be encountered subsequently; it

concerns the career organisation of management members. Two things particularly come to the fore that have some American tinge. Firstly, an emphasis on qualifications, and secondly, the notion of the whizz-kid or high-flyer. The latter results in a policy in which young managers with 'potential' are shunted from department to department to give them a wide breadth of experience before they are considered for more senior posts. This tended to create some tension since often these men would be moved into a department and placed in positions of superiority to older, longer-serving section heads and line managers. But perhaps more pertinently, such a practice gave rise to feelings or expressions of impermanency and instability. It fostered the impression amongst the shop-floor that managers were not really interested in their problems; and even if they were they would barely have an opportunity to resolve them before they were moved on to a new department. As some operators suggested in relation to a newly appointed department manager:

> "You're getting all sorts of problems - by the time you move on (a lot of laughter) you may have it all running nice - but then we get someone new, who's only there again for two years, say, and then the whole thing goes down again."

Then again in another department the operatives had this to say:

> "He'll only be here for a while ... then he'll be off - why should he care if he's not going to be here very long."

The emphasis on qualifications, particularly academic ones, is pervasive throughout the company. In some cases the concern is entirely necessary in view of the nature of the processes and some of the legal requirements that are a corollary of the products being manufactured. However, elsewhere the interest seems somewhat gratuitous. In the higher echelons qualifications are certainly prized (except perhaps amongst those who do not have any). As we

will see later there is a movement of discourse that highly values education. The company has a policy of accepting MBA students for summer placements partly in order "... to see the calibre of the people coming out of the business schools". Even amongst the shop-floor there is a ready recognition of the validity of qualifications. In one department a consultant was employed to advise on certain changes; the shop-floor disagreed with some of the changes and were moved to say: "He didn't even have any qualifications."

This education and qualification euphoria is certainly in keeping with the image of the company - a professional, dynamic, efficient company, modern and up with the latest developments. It requires its managers to be well qualified, smart, young (preferably). Once again this may partially be a ramification of the American connection.

An older manager talking about his two, much younger, section heads highlights some of these points:

> "Did you notice the difference between the two - both go-ahead, young, etc., but Mick has that Cockney accent - it might go against him in this type of company."

Another important aspect of company culture, one clearly identified by the workforce, is its cost-consciousness. On numerous occasions operatives bemoaned the fact that as justification or explanation for managerial action, they were confronted with a financial diatribe. Priority was perceived as very often residing in production at the expense of service functions; much to the frustration of groups such as the engineers: "It's all production .. we are seen as a necessary evil."

Although it is widely accepted that the company does pay well, some also feel that "it always tries to do things on the cheap." Indeed there is a very tight control on the purse strings, with

access to budgetary expenditure both very limited and highly bureaucratic. Any expenditure of size has to be passed through a laborious variety of administrative stages, and is rarely clear-cut at the first attempt. As one of the engineers said in relation to a particular project:

> "You know Tridy as well as I do - we put forward a sum of money - they immediately screamed, and asked us to cut it back."

To add to the amalgam of disparate, if unexceptional factors that contribute to the overall culture of the company, the concept of bureaucracy is not without its place. The point was made above about the difficulty of individual departments in obtaining financial resources for capital expenditure and is an indication of the highly bureaucratic character of the company. Depending upon the sum of money required, there seemed to be, on occasions, an interminable number of administrative stages to pass through. Managers expressed the view that they found the procedure cumbersome, and some seemed to be constantly engaged in a battle to outwit the system; by careful timing, by a strategically constructed RCA, by ensuring that they do not have too much in the pipeline, etc. Getting an RCA passed quickly becomes a matter of political shrewdness.

Two further facets of the bureaucratic element can be illustrated with some comments made by the workforce. In the first instance, the workforce spoke of the company as being characterised by a proliferation of minor rules and regulations:

> "... there's a lot of petty rules and regulations ... it gets up people's noses."

> "We often get blocked by rules; we often have a genuine grievance, and even management agree with us, but they say things like - 'the rules don't allow that' or 'we don't do things like that here'."

will be done.

Despite there being an expression of transition, that certain things were in a state of change, the shop-floor, in relation to issues that they perceived as being of direct relevance to them, clearly indicated that they felt that management suffered from a high level of inertia. It is perhaps a further indication of the abnegation of responsibility on the part of the workforce that any talk of the failure to change things within their sphere of concern was directly attributable to an amorphous and non-specific 'them'. The problems were firmly placed in the lap of management; it was their responsibility to do something about them. Vehement complaint follows any perceived failure to act. Some typical comments included:

> "Nothing ever gets done - we tell people our problems but nothing gets done."
>
> "... we are free to bring anything up - but things don't get done - things seem to be forgotten about."
>
> "They won't change things even if they can see that they are wrong."
>
> "If we raise anything - nothing ever seems to get done. If you were to look at the Minutes, the same things have been there for ages."

And in relation to a particular grievance:

> "This has been going on for three years - people have complained but nothing's been done."

Even in relation to formal mechanisms such as the grievance procedure and the suggestion scheme, the cold hand of inertia freezes things out:

> "Nothing happens when you use it" (re. the suggestion box).
>
> "When it has been used in the past, it has been shot down." (re. the grievance procedure).

This perception by the workforce was extremely pervasive and

underpinned much of the perturbation apparent in the company. In some respects it is clearly linked with the bureaucracy of the place, but that is certainly not the whole story. From the point of view of the shop-floor discourse it had as much to do with the sometimes excessive and unnecessary prevarication of the managerial staff. This may be linked to a certain uncertainty on the part of managers in the face of lack of clarity over questions of managerial style. Some managers seemed to find the connotations of 'progressiveness' confusing, and its practical interpretation tends to end up being stultifying. Authoritarian and paternalistic managers may both have appeared unresponsive. The former because they don't see why they should have to be. The latter because they adopt the attitude that the workforce should passively accept the ministrations of their caring managers; they do not need to be pushy in the short term, since their long term interests are in the guiding hands of management.

Sheer bloody-mindedness is, of course, another feasible cause of the inertia. Whatever the cause, it represents a marked and pervasive attribute throughout the discourse of the shop-floor and in that of the wider company too. It occupied the same space as a lot of expressions of apathy and also scepticism generally and particularly in relation to the possible effects of any participation scheme.

Operative:	"They're not confident you're going to get anything done."
H.K.[1]	"Is that the normal thing here?"
Op.	"Yes" (wide agreement)
Op.	"Most of our problems are known right at the top, but nothing is done ... it never seems to go anywhere."
Op.	"All these schemes in the past have come to nothing."

Op. "Yes. Too often meetings are suggested but nothing happens."

Op. "Yeah. There's been a lot of wasting time in the past. It's gone so far ... but then not got anywhere - it doesn't get to the top."

Op. "It has been going on for years. They make up their minds it's not going up there, and it doesn't."

H.K. "Where do the issues get stopped?"

Op. "All levels - but it never gets higher than ..... (their Department Manager), it's their job to stop issues. To further it, it has to go via other departments - but they don't want to step on other people's toes, to get involved in other departments."

Op. "Things are sat on - that's a fact."

Unionisation?

The company was non-unionised (at least most of its U.K. operations were, including Pencham.) Their absence is clearly linked with the company's U.S. base. It was a fairly specific company policy to avoid unionisation. As we shall see later, quite a large proportion of the workforce came to express the opinion that the participation scheme had been set in motion simply as a means of forestalling the emergence of union activity at the site, and indeed, such was the declared partial aim of the company for its introduction. The interest here, however, is in that portion of the workforce discourse that treats of trade unionism in general.

In this regard it becomes apparent that the shop-floor and the management come to share a similar discursive realm. In one sense it might be said that there was at least a surface shared ideology in relation to trade unions. The prevalent view, espoused by the management and colluded with by the shop-floor, was that the company did not need trade union involvement (although there were some

exceptions to this view).

The range of the discourse in relation to unions was quite broadly based however; ranging from open antipathy to passive support. There was a majority expression that the entrance of union activity into the affairs of the site would prove dysfunctional, with declared hostility to a certain perception of what trade unions represented. This clearly has some relation back to that portion of the company discourse that spoke of traditionalism and authoritarianism in the ways already indicated. As one of the operatives stated in relation to the development of participation:

> "... it's a good idea, better than having the unions in. Unions would destroy this company. It's their power I don't like."

Many of the expressions of the shop-floor in relation to trade unions appeared as an echo of the sloganising stereotypes promulgated in the popular conservative press. They were part of that wider societal discourse that portrayed unions as power-seeking, power-abusing, confrontational, tub-thumping bodies. However not all expressions were quite so negative as that indicated in the above quote. In many instances the attitudes were far more neutral; simply a disinterested response to the possibility of being assimilated into the labour movement:

> "There has been some talk about unions in the past - but I don't think people really want them here."

and

> "We've had unions here before outside the gates and that ... they came in once but I think they only had a few people going to see them."

The distribution drivers on the site represent an anomaly since they were members of the TGWU. It is also they who have the most

contact with the company's other manufacturing site that is unionised (this site is based in the North West where the company was unable to resist the pressures of vociferous union members in the area.) For the drivers and their co-workers at Pencham, this other site often served as a yardstick by which they could measure their own pay and conditions. But as a non-driver, and hence a non-union member of the distribution department declared:

> "... sometimes the drivers get a bit bolshie, especially when they see the others at .....(the other site in the North West)... when they hear, say, from the union men up there that they are getting a rise - they often come back puffing and blowing - but more often than not they get as good, if not better, eventually."

The latter part of that quote illustrates a very important point that has a bearing on the unionisation discourse at Pencham. I have already established, but it is worth reiterating, that the company is fairly widely spoken of as a 'good one' to work for, particularly in relation to its scales of remuneration which are widely considered to be very reasonable, even generous. Working conditions, too, are of a generally high standard. It is part of the company rhetoric that they spend time and effort on members' welfare. And naturally management use that as part of their anti-union pronouncements ... 'there is no need for trade unions, there is nothing that the unions could hope to do on site that the company does not already do in terms of the provisions of generous terms and conditions'. Thus the shop-floor, too, has come to share the view that the traditional areas of union involvement are already adequately catered for by the existing paternalistic benevolence of the company.

Pro-trade union vocalisations only became apparent when those areas of company affairs where trade unions have habitually had some involvement were seen as operating inequitably. For instance, when

the site job evaluation scheme came under a lot of criticism, the vociferous trade union support was activated amongst a certain minority. When the evaluation scheme was seen as failing it was quickly suggested by a few that the only solution was union involvement:

> "The only way we are going to get this sorted out is if we get the unions in."
>
> "Here, here."

The very threat of turning towards trade unions to solve their problems was a potential source of power at the disposal of the workforce in their dealings with management. I am not in a position to do other than guess that on occasions the company may have been moved to act more rapidly and more favourably towards shop-floor demands because they perceived that a failure to do so would have entailed the membership turning towards the unions. However, the pro-union view was such a minority and was lacking in any co-ordination that it probably only represented a minor threat to management; one which they would be aware of and would certainly keep an eye on, but one which for the most part they did not need to respond to.

(1) *Note: H.K. refers to Dr. Howard Kirknatch, one of the consultants employed by the company to implement the scheme. The other was Prof. I.L. Hamming. R.I.W., of course, refers to the author.)*

Talk About Talking

There are four highly significant features of the company discourse that surround the worker-management relationship. The talk circulates around certain very salient issues for the majority of the shop-floor membership. Amongst the host of substantive issues that surfaced during the initial phases of my involvement, these four were recurrent and dominant indexes, and remained central to the discourse as the scheme developed. Each had important repercussions and implications for the establishment and maintenance of the participation exercise. In some ways they could be said to represent the quality of the dialogue that was said to exist between shop-floor and management. Thus they were of interest to the consultants in that they perceived an effective participation as involving a qualitative change in the nature of the dialogue between organisational members. They could also be spoken of as components of the firm's industrial relations arrangements, identified by the work-force as a cause for concern. Each is clearly inter-related to the other and with some of the other issues identified subsequently.

1. The Spectral Manager : How do you influence him?

This represents shop-floor talk that castigated management as being too divorced from the day-to-day affairs and concerns of the shop-floor membership. In its simplest form it represents a complaint that management, including supervisors, are too often conspicuous by their absence. They simply are not perceived as being present at the actual point of production often enough. It applies most forcefully to senior management. Department directors are somewhat mysterious figures to much of the shop-floor, some of whom actually declared that they did not know who their department director

was. The expressed attitude percolates down through the management hierarchy; even the section supervisors, whose espoused function is the day-to-day supervision of the actual work processes and production personnel.

The implied corollary of the simple perceived absence from the point of production, from the point of view of the shop-floor is that the management thereby failed to adequately comprehend the actual work situation of their subordinates. They fail to appreciate the daily problems and antagonisms faced by those working on the production lines; they have a shallow appreciation of what it actually means to work in those areas that they manage. Therefore, it is inevitable that they will misunderstand, or are unaware of the problems that are of central concern to the operatives.

> "Is management ever going to come down to the shop-floor - because they often don't seem to know what is going on."

The quality of the dialogue is inevitably seen as poor, since most of the time there simply isn't any opportunity to engage. The physical absence of management means that the shop-floor feel that they have no opportunity to express their opinions, grievances and so on, in an easy everyday manner. Instead of casually mentioning some issue in passing in the daily routine of things, minor grievances become formalised and overweight by the necessity of seeking out figures of authority and making specific indications to the problem at hand. Or issues are simply left undiscussed and fester.

Another aspect is that there is a reduction in any sense of teamwork, of a whole department working together. The membership gave voice to expressions of isolation from all non-production issues in the department and from the concerns of their superiors. There was a strong sense of divisiveness. In such an atmosphere there is little scope for co-operation.

Hamming:[1] "What sort of things would help?"

Operative: "Well, co-operation .. for instance when you tell someone about things you hope they do something about it. We need more co-operation with management."

From the above quote it should be noted that there is no expressed desire to proactively influence decisions, merely the expressed wish to be attended to and for some action to be taken in relation to the problems they identify.

The lack of co-operation is essentially a manifestation of both management style and the culture of inactivity. In shop-floor discourse, management remain aloof, distant figures of authority. From a paternalistic perspective they know what the workforce need without the necessity for any 'chumminess'. Issues brought to them are irrelevant; rather like the child coming to the father and saying that he needs some toffee, daddy, of course, knows best, that toffee is bad for the teeth and what the child <u>really</u> needs is some celery.

The lack of contact is also a function of the bureaucracy of the place and its extensive hierarchical establishment. A department manager may have as many as four levels of supervision between himself and the actual production operative in a department with less than seventy staff. Such a close span of control does not necessarily ensure useful and productive information flow. Those in higher authority positions actually become more distant and inaccessible. Although the manager, given the spread of his lieutenants on the ground, may feel justified for not perceiving regular direct contact as functionally necessary or desirable.

<u>2. Nullity : So much hot air.</u>

Given the above it is hardly surprising that the membership

discourse also includes items that connate a lack of influence and a feeling of powerlessness. If there is seen to be little contact and virtually no co-operation there is hardly likely to be any scope for the shop-floor to exert an influence. Thus the membership claim that decisions that directly affect their daily routine and immediate working environment are made without any input from the operatives. They maintain that they are rarely consulted, even when the decision being contemplated is with regard to a machine or a work process with which they have been intimately involved for years. "They don't ask us at all about the machines even though we know a lot about them", as one operative put it. Indeed the workforce expressed the view that they actually knew more about work operations and other facets of the production process than those in management. They were often of the opinion that uninformed decisions were made, and that their knowledge and expertise was not being utilised. Management, then, despite their remoteness and their insufficient awareness of the actual problems and requirements of the shop-floor, were seen as making decisions and implementing changes in splendid isolation.

Op: "There is no influence."

RIW: "Do you feel that you have sufficient influence over decisions that are made in relation to your work?"

Op: "No....we have no influence at all."

A sense of powerlessness pervades. Even in those areas of direct and daily concern to those on the shop-floor, there is little perceived opportunity to affect things. Even when a degree of consultation does take place it is often perceived as a white-wash, with the actual decision ultimately taken unilaterally or in a predetermined manner. For example, the chemical laboratories

on site were being redesigned and refurbished, and although virtually all decisions in relation to the alterations were taken outside of the department or only in conjunction with the department manager, it was decided to consult on the colour scheme. Five 'old-stagers' were asked to make a selection from a range of alternatives. They did so independently of each other and, perhaps not surprisingly, produced five different colour schemes. The management group thus decided that they would have to make the selection themselves. The inability of the subordinates to reach a reasonable consensus was spoken of as further proof of the inevitable limitations of democracy and the efficacy of centralised organisational decision making. The format for selection precluded any serious possibility for a consensus, but the paternalistic response is to say 'Look, even when given the opportunity to decide themselves, they can't, perhaps we should make the decision for them.'

In conversations with me, the operatives indicated that at least in some areas of direct, job-related interest, the shop-floor should be allowed to have some influence. It was spoken of, not merely as a means of alleviating the sense of powerlessness, but also as actually being beneficial to the interests of the company generally and to the productive process in particular. A common expression was 'we know the job', with the implied but often unstated addition 'better than they do', and that on that basis it would be in everyone's interest to gauge the opinions of the operators:

Hamming: "What areas of influence?"

Op. "Oh, local things - such as putting in new plant, etc. - at present we are not consulted. We know the machines and how they work better than management. There have been a lot of problems with new machines that were just put in without consulting us."

Even when suggestions and requests are made they are perceived as being largely ignored. So even if contact is established and the point made, there is usually little response; the suggestion is not acted upon and influence remains minimal. The link with the more general 'culture of inactivity' is clearly evident:

> Op. "The last machine we had, we didn't want it. We often know more about the job than they do. We keep on bringing up grievances and pointing out faults, but nothing seems to get done."

There is also the clear link with the authoritarian aspect of management style in some of the responses of management. It is not always simply a question of failing to take note of shop-floor views, sometimes it is a blunt denial of the right of the shop-floor to set foot on the sacred ground of managerial prerogative:

> "If he doesn't like the idea - that's it - it's finished."

A feeling of powerlessness; a sense of being of no account, and of your ideas and suggestions constantly being ignored and disparaged, can only, after a period of time, have a dispiriting effect:

> "... things we've said before have fallen on deaf ears. Even when we know about the job and make suggestions, they get squashed and no notice is taken. We feel we have no influence."

Who can speculate that a person's sense of personal worth and self-esteem would diminish in the face of such dismissive and even derisive responses to one's ability to take an active part in creating the world in which one spends so much of one's life. Some of the shop-floor responded by giving up; they cease to make suggestions, and an atmosphere of apathy takes over. Of course, such a response merely serves to reinforce the suspicions of certain management personnel; the whole thing becomes a vicious circle. Others became angry and

aggressive. Indeed there are a variety of possible responses, all manifest to some degree at Pencham, most of which are ultimately dysfunctional, both at the individual and the organisational level.

3. Squashing, Blocking and Filtering : Some containing tactics.

The discourse of the shop-floor was frequently characterised by phrases that were suggestive of deliberate and destructive practices on the part of management. The talk here moves in the same space as that of the preceding section but is offered up as a more detailed analysis by the shop-floor of their situation and management's reactions to it. The 'blocking of issues' was an oft used phrase by the workforce to suggest that, not only do they not have any influence, but that management personnel deliberately prevent issues from proceeding from their point of origin to points where they may generate action.

Both formally and informally there are intended passages through which grievances and other issues should progress. They should proceed through normal channels until a satisfactory resolution or at least reply is obtained. The contention of the workforce is that this does not happen. They maintain that too often issues are raised at some level in the supervisory system with the object of its continuing through legitimate channels for consideration, but are then 'lost' in the system. 'Lost in the system' is seen rather as a euphemism for a more sinister deliberate blocking at some point along the chain. Action is not forthcoming. Adequate replies and responses are not provided. The workforce is left with the impression that they are being deliberately thwarted. The notion of 'filter' refers to selective blocking. That is, the shop-floor spoke as if they believed that only certain types of issues will be processed;

issues that don't rock the boat, that don't embarrass superiors, or simply issues that are difficult to cope with or are seen as threatening the status quo and the established power arrangements. Trivial issues, or those readily remedied may be processed in a vaguely satisfactory manner.

"Things are just squashed" was another common element of the shop-floor discourse at this stage. The suggestion being that opinions, problems and issues raised by the workforce receive scant attention from supervisors and other superiors and don't get the airing they deserve. Again, it could be seen as another dimension of the 'culture of inactivity', although whereas before the implication was that managers merely treated things with passive disdain, here the accusation is that they are actively and strategically preventing issues reaching their appropriate place or from receiving the public illumination they warrant. Strategies for blocking and squashing issues available to supervisory levels are varied and extensive and there is not really the time or the necessity to go into them here, although some will reappear as we proceed. Buck-passing, obfustication, denial of responsibility, information closure and delaying tactics may be cited as possible strategies. Whatever the methods, the end result for the operatives is that they are left with the feeling that they are banging their heads against a brick wall (the old adage that 'the good thing about bashing your head against a brick wall is that it is nice when you stop' has a place here given the declaration by a number of the workforce that they have given up trying). Some excerpts from the dialogues between the consultants and the shop-floor serve to indicate this portion of the discourse:

HK: "Would you like meetings with ..... (their supervisors)?"

Op: "No, not really - it would be a waste of time, a waste of breath, they squash everything."

Hamming: "What about when you want to say or suggest something?"

Op: "It doesn't go anywhere - you can tell the chargehand but they often don't take it anywhere."

Op: "If we have a grievance, we tell our supervisor."

Hamming: "What happens then?"

Op: "Nothing - we never hear anything else. If you chase it up you just encounter buck-passing."

Op: "We get access to people but we don't get any action. Things are brought up but nothing ever gets done."

HK: "Where's the block?"

Op: "Oh, I don't know - everywhere ... it seems to get blocked on the way up to who ever it should go."

4. The Rhetoric of Communication and Other Hollow Sounds

Parallel to the inability of the workforce to communicate upwards was a perceived scarcity of communication downwards. It was a common feature of the shop-floor discourse that they spoke of management's failure to provide sufficient information. In the first instance there was a lack of information per se, but secondly, it was felt that even when information was provided it was rarely perceived as being relevent to the needs and requirements of the shop-floor. It was suggested that information that management felt was suitable was passed down; but information that the workforce felt it needed and could usefully be in possession of was not made available. Such a lack of information clearly added to the sense of powerlessness since the possession of relevent information is virtually

a prerequisite for the possibility of effective influence.

Poor communication is frequently posited these days as a catchall for a ludicrously extensive panoply of problems. Blame can be attributed with ease and without personal recriminations by invoking such an abstract concept; it depersonalises a problem. It is fashionable then, for those who wish to disguise the failings of individuals or to camouflage other aspects of the organisation's systems, to designate the issue as a 'communications problem'. Such a strategy is particularly effective if these recipients compound it by also accepting the labelling. Thus we find in this company the workforce also identifying 'communications' as a problem, as well as managerial staff.

> "One of the basic problems is communication."
>
> "The biggest downfall in this company, and always has been, is the lack of communication"
>
> "The communication is diabolical"

There are, of course, important problems accruing if communication systems are poor or inadequately maintained, but the phrase 'communications problem' is too often purely symptomatic and serves only to mask the reality. It is too often a rhetorical device to refocus concern away from the true source of the difficulty. It becomes a slogan, a linguistic platitude that takes on fresh meaning and diverts attention from a useful analysis of the underlying matrix of issues.

The general point is that the workforce spoke of information from managerial levels being withheld. People felt that they didn't really know what was going on, that they exist in an informational vacuum. There is then the inevitable sense of not being involved, and the sense of powerlessness is reinforced. People's expectations are vacuous; things are operating outside of the range of their

influence. It is a feeling many people find extremely uncomfortable:

> "There's a lack of information coming from the top .. that makes people disgruntled."

It makes it exceedingly difficult for individuals to locate their own efforts and contributions in the wider scheme of things. It also breeds distrust and suspicion amongst the workforce vis-a-vis their superiors. All this is quite apart from the specific problems arising from the substantive nature of the withheld information.

Just as there appeared talk of filtering of issues in relation to upward communication, so it is encountered again here:

> "There is bad communication ... there is a gap somewhere. We hear what they want us to hear."

Again, with regard to some meetings that chargehands hold with their immediate superiors in which they are provided with work related information, the intention being that they convey it then to their charges, some operatives had this to say:

> "They often don't tell us things. They tell us what they want really."

and:

> PB: " Are there any particular problem areas - such as communication?"
>
> Op: "Yes there are - they don't tell us anything."
>
> Op: "Yes but we don't really make an effort to get to know though."
>
> Op: "Some chargehands tell us - others don't - or they tell some people but not others."

There is always the problem, of course, that whatever people are told, they may continue to suspect that there is more. Like the jealous wife who is told by her husband that he danced with the secretary at the office party, she always suspects that he hasn't told everything. But experience generally reveals whether the whole picture has been presented or not. People do frequently

acquire the information, often indirectly and informally from other sources, the misdemeanours of the official, intended informer are thus exposed and the degree of trust for future disclosures is lessened by degree:

> "All the information we get has to be asked for - or we get it eventually by word of mouth."

Information usually does permeate down, but it is too often not provided by the appropriate person at the appropriate time. The information arriving indirectly may well be misguided and ill-timed and serve only to aggravate the situation. People begin to speculate about why they are kept in the dark, such speculations are invariably of a negative nature. Management comes to be viewed with a good deal of suspicion, each piece of information provided is examined for unspoken motivations and intentions.

Rumour

A natural corollary of the lack of information provision is the emergence of rumours. Rumour represents an attempt to fill that informational vacuum. It is an attempt to provide some sense to activities and intentions about which real knowledge is withheld. Given the pressing need to comprehend and instil meaning into their working environment, explanations are constructed and provided in the absence of authoritative versions. Some are total fabrications, others based on partial information, still others may in substance be entirely accurate but lack an official seal of approval. Rumours also serve another purpose, they may provide the instigator with a certain amount of kudos; the man in the know. Rumour is a virtual inevitable response to the inadequate provision of appropriate information. Indeed the fact that rumours exist is a fairly clear indication that people feel that the true story isn't being revealed.

Ultimately, however, rumour is unsatisfactory, even for those who feed off it. Again, the true version is too often finally discovered and the rumour and the rumour-mongers are discredited. Over a period of time, every rumour comes to be treated with suspicion, it may be taken in preference to the diluted version provided officially but nagging doubts persist about their validity. Also, whilst people may be highly suspicious of the information provided by management, they are still loath to attribute too much credence to the accounts provided by the colleagues. But clearly rumours are chiefly unsatisfactory because they are too frequently misinformed, distorted, prejudiced or just plain wrong. Actions based on rumour can have a profoundly disrupting influence. It is clear from the comments made, and more specifically, the manner in which they were made, that the workforce are aware of the basic untenability of rumour. Rumours abound, but are viewed as a symptom of a far from ideal situation and not as a useful replacement in the absence of correctly supplied information.

> "You hear all the tales, but don't get the real story"
>
> "Most of what we hear is from rumour. You hear more about your own department from people in other departments than you do from your own."
>
> "We get all our information by rumour."

The latter two comments are a severe indictment of the company's information dispersal systems. Whether they represent a true picture of the situation or not is, to some extent, irrelevant; the fact that people feel that way is a very sad comment on the climate of the company. The fact that rumours proliferated was perceived by all as an indication of a position that required attention.

Isolation

Statements around the item 'isolation' are compounded by a number of factors, some of which have already been implicitly outlined. For instance lack of contact and information both contribute directly to a feeling among the workforce that, as individuals or as groups, they are isolated from the main thoroughfares of the organization's activities. Isolation is a term utilized to encapsulate some feelings of unrelatedness, of non-involvement, of not being encompassed into a unitary company or department identity. Individuals and/or groups did not meaningfully identify themselves either with the company as a whole or significant portions of it, such as their departments. The image is one of alienated individuals or groups existing in a perfunctory manner within a cultural matrix that revolves around something other than their aspirations, cognitions, actions or values. There is no sense of belongingness.

Much of the sense of isolation, as already stated, derives from a series of facets of the allure of the company. The bureaucracy of the place, for instance adds to the sense of isolation, and in a sense the managerial styles of authoritarianism and even paternalism increase the degree of non-involvement. As indicated in the preceding sections the lack of contact and co-operation and the lack of provision of information contributes considerably to the feelings of isolation. There is, however, a further dimension that combines forcefully with the others to provide the sense of disconnection. It is the relationships between departments and functionally or physically separated groups within departments. It was this in particular that was identified by the workforce as a major source of disunity, and of the absence of belongingness. In the main department studied in the field research, there existed a number of sub-divisions on either functional grounds or on the basis of

physical location. So, in addition to the potential areas of conflict and tension at inter-departmental interfaces, there were also intra-departmental interfaces with similar potential. For instance, there were two different product lines requiring diverse production processes that were located on opposite sides of the plant; there were a group of maintenance engineers and fitters, physically adjacent but functionally and in other ways quite distinct from the main shop-floor; there was a daytime shift and a twilight shift with important differences in terms of the types of operatives employed on each and even in working procedures. This does not exhaust the division but serves well enough to indicate areas of potential tension and confusion. It was in this department especially that comments relating directly to a notion identified and identifiable as isolation were most vociferously made, although other departments presented similar views, but perhaps to a lesser degree. The engineering department, for instance, has inter-departmental wranglings with virtually every other department on site. The distribution centre is geographically isolated, being situated on another site in a different part of the town; here the sense of isolation was again particularly strong and compounded by this spatial difference.

On occasion the expression was given literally: "We are really isolated." On other occasions it is implicitly but clearly indicated:

> "We never work for one factory - we all seem to work for different bits."

and

> "We all seem to be separate departments within a department - blame for anything is pushed from one section to another."

It is curious, in a way, that the sense of isolation in this regard does not stem from the attitudes or behaviour of management but largely as a result of the approach of one section of a workforce towards another. Although clearly questions of organizational structure and differentiation of the labour force, which are essentially questions of managerial policy, play a large part in the emergence of these areas of tension, it must be said that, whatever the cause, there was little sense of solidarity amongst the workforce as a whole. One may speculate as to whether the presence of a trade union organization would have affected that. The fact remains that relations between sections of the workforce, even within the same departments were somewhat sour. In this instance the expression 'them-and-us' is more applicable to different shop-floor factions than to the traditional worker-management rift. It was, in fact, a term used in this sense on more than one occasion. When asked about the relationship between the main production shop-floor and the maintenance engineers, one engineer replied:

> "... It's still 'them-and-us' to some extent - we get blamed for everything"

Even more bitterly, the relationship between the day and twilight shifts was summed-up thus by some twilight operatives:

> "We get a lot of friction there ... They seem to dislike us, to sabotage things for when we come on."
>
> "There seems no continuity ... don't know why ... it's the same supervisors."

Shift-workers, perhaps not unnaturally, experience a strong sense of isolation. They feel they aren't told things, that things pass them by. The sense of identity with the department is even less among these groups. Some maintain that their contact with management is minimal, not even knowing who the manager is. But, more

important than being cut-off from the company, from the managers, is the sense that they are cut-off from their working colleagues in the same department. It was this that created the most distress, disappointment and rancour. As an operative from a small production area located in a basement (whilst still being administratively located within the much larger department) declared with some anguish:

"That's the forgotten race down there."

Favouritism, Victimisation and Rudeness

This section deals with some of the ways in which the workforce characterise their managers and supervisors. This and the following section in a sense represents criticisms of the worker-management relationship as seen through the discourse of the shop-floor personnel. Although some managers were viewed in a favourable light, they were in the minority. Others fit an "Oh they're alright" category, others still were perceived rather poorly and were portrayed as exhibiting versions of the behaviours presented in the section title. Really this section is only a sampling of some salient comments made by the workforce about their superiors, it is a caricature that paints a somewhat blacker picture than existed, as does perhaps much of the reported discourse in this chapter. That is not to deny that the behaviours described here were not apparent, indeed they were and to a significant degree, but some more favourable views were also given expression from time to time. But, as we shall see here and in the next section, respect for superiors was not a recurring theme.

In some instances supervisors were presented as rather malevolent figures, capable of mild sadism. For example, in one area production processes required the frequent moving of operatives, at very short notice, from established working groups to fresh and

sometimes strange production lines. The practice itself was distasteful to most of the female operatives involved, but the manner in which it was done caused a good deal of distress, and a good deal of venom to be directed towards the supervisors responsible.

Op: "If you're happy, you get moved."

"If you don't like that band, you'll be there more than ever." ('band' refers to the work group associated with each specific production process associated with given product lines.)

"If they see you're happy on a job, they think 'we'll wipe that smile off her face and move her'."

Such comments indicate a petty maliciousness, an abuse of power. Of course there is always another side to the story and management personnel would deny that such reprehensible motives lay behind such supervisory decisions and are able to present cogent justifications for such methods of work organization. But that misses the point, the maliciousness was perceived as a reality by the operatives and if I am trying to map the climate of the place then such perceptions are crucial. Whether the accusations are true or not, they exist and such behaviour is part of the lore of the place. The yang to this particular yung from the point of view of the operatives is an equally discrediting favouritism:

"If your face fits you stay there."

"... it depends on whether he likes you or not."

One is hardly to be surprised that those in power would have their favourites among their subordinates, but when a decision is made not in favour of those with merit but of those 'with blue eyes' as it was put, then obviously others are going to feel dissatisfied. In the eyes of those involved such favouritism is seen as damning, even if, to an untouched observer, it may seem non-surprising and an expected

feature of such environments.

Victimization, or its possibility, appeared in other guises. When faced with the prospect of being in a position to air their opinions in a participation format, people expressed a good deal of concern that they would run the risk of 'blackeyes', of recriminations outside of the public forum. There was some general adherence to the view that it was better to keep quiet; that a low profile meant a quiet life. To be too opinionated, by opposing the established line, one was likely to incur the displeasure of authority figures who could make life difficult:

> "... if they realise you've got views, are a bit bolshie, they pick on you."

The expected compliance is backed up by possible unpleasant sanctions. The managerial ethos whereby operatives should accept their place and allow management to exercise their caring obligations/natural authority is reinforced by the workforce feeling that even if they are challenging it would not be acceptable and would be punished.

Contumely is a further manifestation of an unpleasant attitude displayed by managerial and supervisory staff. Again there exists a full gamut of rude behaviour, ranging from direct scornful abuse to simple snubbing. In its milder forms it may appear rather insignificant, but in the day-by-day routine, working in close proximity, it becomes excruciatingly niggling. Common courtesies and pleasantries that one would expect to exchange with the milkman or the man at the bus-stop are not observed.

> "Some of our bosses don't even say good morning to us - it gets up our noses."

The aloof manager appears on the scene again here. Whatever the motive or excuse it is taken as a direct and personal insult by many of the workforce. Essentially it gives rise to the unpleasant feeling

of being treated as a non-person in their eyes. It marks territory; 'it's not the case that we are a group of individual human beings who strive to eke out a living in the same place', it says 'I am a manager, you are something else'. In this situation the relationship is not one of person to person, it's something other.

> "It was better before ... with the managers. You were treated like a person then, we just feel like part of the furniture now."

This sense of making people aware of the differences of station, of placing distances between people seemed quite pervasive. Individuals are denigrated and degraded, many of the characteristics that are normally considered a vital part of what it is to be human are denied them. They shouldn't express their own opinions, they shouldn't question. It is legitimate to treat them as non-human really, even to the extent of whistling to them like dogs, as was the practice of one supervisor.

> "They treat us in a rude way - whistle us even."
>
> "He would whistle (makes a piercing whistle by placing fingers between the teeth) and points (demonstrates) rather than speak to us."
>
> "He would just say 'Rubbish' and put you down if you suggested anything to him."

It is a direct attack on an individuals sense of personal worth and clearly aroused a good deal of anger even hate.

> "He's just ignorant."
>
> "He's pig-ignorant he is."

Respect

This section again deals with the conceptions the shop-floor hold about management levels, and should be considered in the light of the points just made. In some ways it is a catalogue of miscellaneous criticisms by the shop-floor of managers and management practices. There are some specific anti-management grievances and then some generalised critiques of poor organising and planning followed by a specific issue, that of differential supervision. Some of the first could legitimately have been included in the last section but have been held over.

There was a good deal of invective directed at certain managers and supervisors; these aren't isolated individuals but represent a significant proportion of the management population encountered. Some responses indicate positive dislike, but the over-riding impression is one of lack of respect for them both as persons and as managers; they simply aren't held in very high regard. Some of these expressions index expected and traditional responses to an absent and mysterious higher echelon:

"People at the top aren't always straight."

Others contain a degree of vitriolic that is perhaps surprising, and adds up to a rather crushing character assassination. They represent personal condemnations and criticisms of them as individuals. The faults thus exposed, real or apparent, vary in their degree and magnitude:

"He doesn't like us - he doesn't like anyone"
(said of a department director).

Two supervisors from one department, in particular, came in for a good deal of caustic comment:

"They are just like a couple of kids."

"He just loves to aggravate."

Again in relation to their role in moving operatives suddenly from one work band to another, they are perceived as doing so in an unnecessarily rude manner:

"That's why they are so popular" (said sarcastically).

Others were characterised as ogres, as oppressive authoritorians who displayed disdain openly and who crushed any suggestions initiated by operatives. Even more blackening, one operative was moved to decry "We had one over there who was a self-styled Hitler". Hardly expressions of respect and endearment.

Others came off lightly, but the inherent lack of respect is evident still:

> "We sometimes think he's a bit of a goody-goody. He's a bit two-faced I think. We all think he's a bit of an old woman to be honest - he doesn't get things done - he won't commit himself - he can't seem to reach a decision. You can get to him and talk to him all right, but often things don't get done."

And:

> "My opinion of him is that he's a bit two-faced - he sort of smiles at you and seems pleasant - but gives the impression that he's not really listening to you. But when you've told him things he nods but then he doesn't do anything about it."

Back to the ubiquitous 'culture of inactivity' again. Clearly management did not inspire confidence or respect in the workforce, more likely responses seem to be hatred, anger and derision. But again it must be noted at this point that such views were not universal, some managers were held in fairly high regard by some subordinates, although in all honesty, they appear to be in a minority.

There were some more generalised, non-personalised criticisms of management per se. Including such straightforward comments as "A lot of the problems are bad management". As we shall see shortly, there was a fairly extensive feeling that things were not planned, organised, administered, and, thereby, managed with great effect. There appeared to be scant belief in management's capabilities. Some attributed this not to individual failings but to the ridiculously hierarchical structure of the organisation, as they saw it. Choose your cliche - too many cooks spoil the broth - or - too many chiefs and not enough indians. It was a common conception that the company was top-heavy (sorry, another cliche) with damaging consequences, particularly in relation to the speed and efficiency of decision-making:

> "There are too many managers - decisions aren't made - management don't manage, there's no discipline."

We have already seen that such a conception was also held by some junior management levels, notably in relation to the perceived progressive style of management. People in such posts often felt anomic and unsure of what were their own spheres of decision-making and who should be deciding on what. In some departments peculiar roles of ambiguous status were created, often filled by young specialists who performed liaison and co-ordinating functions, this added to the confusion of some line-management.

With a slight difference of emphasis, other criticisms relate to the managing of work processes. There was a fairly common accusation that things were poorly organised, that planning left a lot to be desired. From management's point of view this may be attributable to the lack of communication between departments even at the managerial level. Relations and information-sharing between

production department managers and, for example, the Quality Assurance people, or between managers and the scheduling department, were often viewed by those managers as in need of substantial improvement. The bureaucracy in the place was also proposed as a source of inhibition to effective and rapid organising on the shop-floor. From the point of view of the shop-floor, however, examples of inefficient organising, or seemingly ad hoc planning were usually attributed directly to the superiors at department level.

> ".... and .... (two supervisors) don't seem to stick to the scheduling, or to plan and organise properly."
>
> "Things seem very badly organised - if we can see the problems, why can't they ... It's very frustrating."
>
> "Scheduling of work is a problem often. You can be given 5-6 jobs in 10 minutes - it's bad organisation. We often stand around for a long time before we get set on. There is something wrong in the office organisation."
>
> "The planning and scheduling's up the creek."

Management seem able to provide legitimate justifications for the procedures that give rise to such comments. Perhaps not ultimately but at least sufficient to indicate that the responsibility is frequently not theirs but lies outside of the department. It is really a sad comment on the quality of the dialogue existing between line managers and their subordinates that the workforce is not at all aware of the problems also facing their managers. Management clearly fail to convey to the workforce the reasons why factors directly affecting their working environment often appear to be in disarray. There is a veritable ravine preventing mutual understanding of each others interests, problems and bedevilments. In some instances, it seems clear that the perceived reprehensible attitudes of some managerial personnel are without excuse, but, where there are genuine alternatives and legitimate explanations and there persists destructive mutual misunderstanding, is perhaps a more biting indictment of the climate of the company.

Ignorance, Fear and Despair

The shop-floor were ignorant of the mechanisms existing that they could have formally utilised in a furtherance of their position. They were further ignorant of other aspects of the company that could have been of benefit to their interests. Again, we could blame communications, but also speculate that the workforce had been forced into a protective shell from which they but rarely ventured out to test the system, to actively seek out means of progressing their case. The culture of inactivity extends down into the workforce, they become apathetic even about their own dilemmas.

For instance, although a formal grievance procedure existed, it was a common claim that people simply didn't know what it was or how to use it. And similarly the suggestion scheme, some people did not know what it entailed. We have already seen how even when such mechanisms were utilised, they failed to achieve the desired result. If such schemes and procedures are perceived as impotent maybe after a while the desire to use them withers away until people eventually forget how they ever did use them.

I've already indicated that because of the relationship between managers and their subordinates, it was quite often the case that the shop-floor did not know who various personnel were. Directors were known of, but not known personally, often not even physically identifiable. In some sections, individuals were even unclear as to whom their department manager was. But, perhaps most culpably, large sections of the workforce were blissfully ignorant of the personnel department, its personnel, its functions and its accessibility. Large numbers were unaware of who their area representative was, for instance.

Op: "It seems that some people don't know who the personnel officers are."

Dept.
Manager: (incredulously) "You don't know who the area personnel rep is?"

Op: Some don't."

Or even how personnel can be approached:

"How do we get to personnel?"

All this despite the fact that such information is readily available in company manuals and the like. Such things represent some of the few internal rights and protections at the disposal of the employees, it seems incredible that they are not aware of them or how to employ them, particularly given the atmosphere of the site.

In the face of some of the dimensions of managerial activities outlined in the preceding sections, some indications were revealed that some of the shop-floor were experiencing a certain amount of fear. In the preceding section I indicated that some managers were caricatured as ogres, and others displayed a degree of sadism. Some people were naturally afraid of such types, particularly given the feelings of isolation pervading the place and the apparent ignorance of the legitimate formal means by which grievances could be redressed.

"If there's a grievance people wouldn't dream of going to Cyril - he's an ogre type."

A major fear was of recriminations, of incurring wrath if one appeared too outspoken, or critical.

"People are afraid, afraid to complain."

"But some people may not want to go to Cyril - they may be frightened."

Fear of recriminations, was perhaps not unnaturally, a recurring theme later with regard to the participation scheme. People seemed genuinely concerned that they would be intimidated if they were

openly critical. I have already shown that sanctions are available, that life on the shop-floor can be made very unpleasant if a supervisor, for instance, 'has it in for you'. The lack of solidarity in the place, the sense of isolation, the ignorance of individual rights leave people feeling vulnerable and fearful.

The notion of despair derives from a number of comments made that can only be thus described. They are a verbal throwing up of the hands or a sudden drooping of the shoulders and hanging of the head. They are the far side of apathy, not mere disinterest but a conscious giving up. It is fairly clear that the authoritarianism, the bureaucracy, the lack of influence, the lack of information, the constant blocking of issues, the victimisation, the rudeness and the isolation finally take their toll. People become tired of hammering away and getting nowhere, of being ignored, treated as non-persons, of being abused. It is as if things finally become too much and people cave-in under the oppressive weight. Really the comments need no further explanation so I will close this chapter with despair:

"There's a lack of interest."

"We are just put down all the time, the girls have given up saying anything because they never get anywhere."

"I've given up - things don't get done."

"It's very frustrating."

"We don't bother saying anything."

"IT PAYS YOU TO BE USELESS."

"WE JUST GIVE UP."

"IN THE END WE DON'T CARE."

"WE'RE NOTHING."

CHAPTER 3

PRELIMINARY MEANINGS : THE SHOP-FLOOR

Introduction : A Methodological Precursor

In this section and in the one to follow I will seek to describe some of the preliminary meanings that appear in the talk of organisational members at that point when my involvement with the company had just begun. In the first section here I will explore that in relation to shop-floor members and in the next section I shall turn to a consideration of the preliminary posture of middle-management personnel.

In some senses, of course,this represents an arbitrary point of interruption in the definitional process. Any such procedure serves as an artificial stoppage in the flow of process. But clearly one has to start somewhere; the interruption, abstraction and fixing of events plucked out of a ceaseless process is part of the price paid for any reportage or analysis. Besides at various other stages, I do refer back past this point in time. And secondly, it was at a coincidental point in time at which these people were being formally exposed to participation at Tridy for the first time.

The attempt here then, following extensive conversations with members of the workforce and observing the consultants interviewing the same, is to describe some of the salient relations embodied in that talk between participation and other verbal elements. The analysis does not rigorously pursue the methods implicated by the earlier discussion of the problem of meaning. It remains a more traditional, interpretive ethnographic account with little attention paid to the rhetorical features of the language employed. Indeed the progression of the thesis as a whole in some ways reflects the theoretical and methodological development that took place. The thesis then reflects

a movement in which the post-structuralist/semiotic conception of, and approach to, meaning comes increasingly to the fore.

What must be remembered in this context is that the implications, the behavioural consequences and extensions of these relations, and their intentionality, are not explorable in depth; nor need they be. In the first instance such elements as 'information sharing' are not explored behaviourally (at this point) or semantically by those employing them in their talk. The logical extensions of such expressions are not pursued by those using them. They stand, then, as rather bald articulations of the relations members feel able, or want to associate with participation at that point in time, and in that context. They need not be treated as intended elaborations or carefully considered mappings of the concept 'participation'. For the practical purposes of displaying a rational view of what participation means to a particular audience at a particular point in time they can be seen as more or less adequate, as they stand.

When a section head states that participation entails an attempt to improve co-operation between sections of the workforce, it is fruitless to attempt to delve beyond that verbalisation to seek for any intended meaning or to attempt to relate it to the speakers biography; the statement is sufficient unto itself and its relations with other present verbalisations and its position in a possible paradigmatic environment. Particularly so since for the practical purposes of his speech in that context, it may well be seen as rationally sufficient to simply make the association 'participation-integration' and merely allow any possible connotations to reverberate as they will.

The meaning is in the relations themselves, in the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. One could, of course, begin to explore some of the connotations of 'integration' or 'co-operation' at this

point, but each such analysis is a lengthy process and perhaps not necessary for the purposes of these two sections. The simple associations only are presented here with some delving into further possibilities. The relations come to enter the public discourse around participation. They are transformed and also transform as they re-occur and enter into new relationships in new contexts as the process continues. Some disappear except for their trace from the text, others achieve a relative fixity. As a collection here, abstracted from the process, they form a kind of texture of meanings that in abstraction represents a portion of shop-floor and middle-management discourse.

In interactional terms, for those members and their co-interactants, and for that situation in which the particular speech-act occurred, these (simple) associations were given and accepted as practically sufficient. There was no semantic pursual into infinite regression as to what such-and-such meant, nor did the conversation irretrievably break down. How and why they were accepted as sufficient in that context is perhaps an important sociological question - one addressed by the ethnomethodologists and partially answered by notions such as the 'etcetera clause' (see Garfinkel 1967). The statement 'participation means greater co-operation', say, performs (Austin 1963) a practical purpose in the context of its production that is sufficient for those present. It is accepted as fulfilling certain requirements. In a sense the statement 'passes' its interactional test and is taken as rational, appropriate and adequate for that context. We might assume, then, that the relation was not without meaning - the interaction did not break down. What need we say about the statement other than that it 'passed', it did not create anomy or invoke a state of meaninglessness, it was accepted in the course of

the interaction without hiccough? - it must then be taken as adequate for the purpose at hand. In other words it performed some 'work' of an appropriate form.

In what is to follow then, there is a description of some of the more salient relations between participation and other items as realised in the talk, first of shop-floor members, and subsequently of middle-management. I have been analytic to the extent of labelling certain relations myself - abstracted from a more amorphous verbalisations. Such liberties with the data lift it 'off the ground' to an extent but are inevitable. There is, of course, also a degree of speculation at those points where I fail to avoid being evaluative.

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'Technical' and Mundane Meanings of Participation

The term 'participation' might conceivably be expected to have some meaning for individuals even before they experience it directly in the form of some industrial scheme or other. A useful distinction can be made between, what might be termed, the 'technical' usage of the term 'participation', and its everyday common language usage (although clearly there is much interpenetration and such distinctions have an element of artificiality). By the former I intend those meanings associated with the word that derive from its employment in the various, official, academic and professional discourses around the notion of industrial democracy. Thus many of the 'technical' meanings arise, in large measure, from the academic community and its consideration of the issue, and from governmental and business and commercial institutions' deliberations of same, and perhaps more pertinently, the media coverage of such convolutions. On the other hand 'participation' is undeniably a word present in everyday, mun-

dane discourse and as such has a variety of meanings associated with it, some of which may well be very different (more primal?) from those covered by its 'technical' uses. The meaning for particular individuals will be a function of their familiarity with these different discourses and their ability to position the term within them. Thus anyone sitting on the national executive of a major trade union will probably have participated in a discourse that locates 'participation' in particular ways; that gives it a particular position of intelligibility and that has it in particular relations with other elements; whereas for someone who has encountered the term most often in the context of his local scout troop, it may have an entirely different location and texture of relations.

The term 'participation' is probably recognisable to most members of the research site organisation, although some may not be able to locate other lexical items or situational uses by which the term takes on specific and significant meaning for them. For most, though, any meaning associated with the term is probably non-problematic prior to its presentation in the Tridy context. There is likely to be little homogeneity amongst members, but what meanings are apparent are probably held comfortably.

These meanings, on both fronts, then, are used here as an abstracted starting point of the definitional process. The meanings articulated in these initial stages will clearly have implications for subsequently emerging ones. The thesis will attempt to explore that process and reveal how the meanings emerge, are transformed, decompose and reform over the course of the development of the scheme.

'Technical' Meanings

In the first instance, then, I wish to draw attention to some of the 'technical' meanings of participation revealed by members at the very onset of the scheme. 'Technical' meanings in the sense that they can be seen as belonging to, or being drawn from, the academic, professional, business and media discourses about the issue. Any subsequent analysis of 'everyday' conceptions of participation may reveal meanings that seem to imply a reference back to such technical uses - but here I want to focus on more overt references.

The academic and media debate about industrial democracy and participation, particularly that centred around the Bullock report (1977) and its ramifications, is likely to have had more impact on managerial staff than upon others; senior management staff in particular. The talk during the last Labour Government (and to a much lesser extent since) of the possibility of legislation for industrial democracy, would clearly be noteworthy for senior management, ensuring that the whole notion be given some attention by them. Furthermore, the issue has been given a fairly extensive airing in such managerial publications as "Management Today" and "Personnel Management", as well as I.P.M., B.I.M. and even C.B.I. pamphlets. The very fact that a scheme was instigated at all at Tridy bears witness to the awareness of senior management to the issue.

However the range of meanings present within these discourses is extremely extensive. Any review of academic participation literature (see Poole, M. 1978; Wall, P. & Lischeron, J. 1977; Warr, P. & Wall, T. 1975; Blumberg, P. 1968; Derber, M. 1970; Patchen, M. 1970; Balfour, C. (ed)1973; Horner, J. 1974; Marchington, M. 1980; Strauss, G. & Rosenstein, E. 1970) reveals how widely and diversely participation is defined: from suggestion schemes (see Gorfin, C.C. 1969) - to the quality of working life/humanisation of work through

to self-management and workers control. The debate extends into all kinds of organisations and even into community level participation. There is, of course, a heavy cross-cultural component with academic literature referring to industrial democracy in Germany (e.g. Boehmer, H. von 1977; Hartmann, H. 1970; Mandel, E. 1973; Schuckman, A. 1957; Spiro, H.J. 1958), Yugoslavia (e.g. Adizes, I. 1971; Broekmeyer, M. (ed) 1970; Wachtel, H. 1973; Vanek, J. 1972; Obradovic, J. French, J.R.P. and Rodgers, W.L. 1970; Singleton, F. and Topham, T. 1968; Stephen, F.H. 1976-7; Rus, V. 1970; Riddell, D.S. 1968; Obradovic, J. 1970), Norway (e.g. French, J.R.D., Israel, J. and As, D. 1960; Thorsrud, E. & Emery, F.E. 1970; Bernhardsen, B. 1969; Van Gels, M.R. and Jonker, H.W. 1969; Qvale, T.U. 1973), Israel (e.g. Tabb, J.Y. and Goldfarb, A. 1970; Rosenstein, E. 1970), Sweden (see Bouvin, A. 1977), Algeria (see Clegg, I. 1971 and Blair, T.L. 1970), Cuba (see Zeitlin, M. 1967), Latin America (Juralewicz, R.S. 1974), Chile (Barrera, M. 1981). There is also an extensive literature on efforts in the United States (see Zwerdling, D. 1980 for a useful summary and some interesting cases. See also Berman, K. 1967, Bernstein, P. 1976 and Bellas, C. 1972). Each country and each report relates different forms and experiences of participation, there is little equability. The meanings of participation, its relations of difference here are exceedingly varied. The majority of this work is either fairly prescriptive or is based upon attitudinal survey material. There have been relatively few in-depth case studies of participation exercises (exceptions being Marchington, M. 1980; Bank and Jones 1977; Knight & Guest 1979; Bate and Mangham 1981), and even fewer that have attempted to avoid attitude survey measures and to access the meanings of participation for members. Little attention has been paid to the way participation is defined by members in the interactional process of the development of a particular scheme.

In relation to business discourse the picture is much the same, and in relation to media coverage, Zwerdling, D. (1980) has this to say:

> "What does 'democracy at work' really mean? If you've been following all those newspaper stories on companies that are experimenting with changes in the workplace, it isn't likely that you'll know the answer - you'll be more confused than ever. For the newspapers have bandied about the notion of 'worker democracy' so loosely that the terms have lost their meaning." (p.2)

Whilst not sharing Zwerdling's implicit attempt to control meaning and assertion that multiple meaning equals loss of meaning, the sense of the myriad relations into which 'participation' forms in popular print is conveyed.

It would make no sense, then, to attempt to relate articulations at Tridy back to any of these sources in any hermeneutic fashion. It is perhaps necessary, though, to be aware of them as a theoretic and quasi-theoretic discourse that stands as a backdrop - a part of the paradigmatic environment - to the present articulations. One should also be aware that the relations realised at Tridy display the intertextual and interdiscursive quality of any verbal construction.

The impact, if any, of these discourses is most likely to have been on senior and middle-management to whom we will return shortly. But with regard to the shop-floor members, the first thing that needs to be said is that the majority seemed largely unaware of, or were unable to articulate, these areas of discourse. Their verbalisations about participation largely eschewed any reference to its technical meanings and was confined, thereby, to its everyday usage associations. It is to these that I shall return to shortly. However, some individuals did profess to having some awareness of the concept at the

technical level and it is important, even though a minority expression, to reveal them here. Others may have encountered the wider 'technical' discourses but had not taken them on board as relocatable reference points. As one rep. put it, although remembering being aware of some of the media debate about participation, he also said:-

> "But I didn't really pay much attention. Well, you don't, do you? - not until it happens to involve you."

Most members tended to express the view that they really had no pre-conceptions about participation before the scheme was introduced at their factory. It seems quite likely that participation was not an item that frequently entered their discourse or pre-occupied them at all. But when confronted with the expression many were able to construct some verbal arrangement that gave participation some meaningful relations. Whether these meanings were generated in relation to some familiarity with a T.U. publication on industrial democracy, or via pub-talk, or by some other common usage of the word, is of interest and has some implications for the emergence of other meanings as the scheme develops.

Some of the discursive grounds for the articulated relations were somewhat esoteric. For instance, one of the members, talking to the consultants, said:-

> "Have you gone into the Post Office Whitley meetings - what you're trying to set up now has been going on for yonks. It's very effective. They have meetings - and by the next meeting they must give answers and reasons. I don't think that would happen here."

Clearly such a statement could be interpreted in a number of ways. It may be serving particular and deeply contextualised purposes. For instance, it may represent a means of demonstrating knowledge about participation - a 'showing-off' display. Or it may represent a means of putting down the position and efforts of the consultants: "...what

you're trying to set up now has been going on for yonks." But in its present relations it connotes certain meanings around participation.

Quite apart from any specific meanings relating to 'Post Office Whitley' meetings, which is really another meaning category somewhat distinct from 'participation', the statement can be said to reveal other meanings about participation, thus:-

Participation has been 'going on for yonks'.

Participation in some forms (P.O. Whitley Committee) is very effective.

Participation involves holding meetings.

Participation entails management and the shop-floor in some configuration.

Participation involves management being obliged to respond to the shop-floor.

Participation means that management should provide answers and reasons to shop-floor queries: '...they (management) must give answers and reasons.'

The latter also has some tacit implications about power relations, about obligations and rights; the word 'must' says quite a lot in this context. And finally 'I don't think that would happen here': participation is unlikely, or inappropriate, or not legitimate in certain situations. Some of these meanings are the kind of tacit understandings that are revealed in members everyday usage of participation as I hope to demonstrate more fully later. The specific reference to the Post Office Whitley meetings is interesting in its own right.

Another operative, who used to be a shop-steward in another factory and later became a representative, whilst maintaining that he did not know much about participation previously, did declare some awareness. He claimed that he did receive some information about it

whilst acting as a shop-steward. He also recalled reading a pamphlet somewhere about industrial democracy in West Germany. He was unable to elaborate specifically about any knowledge he may have gained from such sources, although he did elaborate on what participation meant to him, which may have unconsciously been informed by these sources.

The following dialogue will serve to illustrate some of the other types of 'technical' meanings that were revealed in the talk of shop-floor members at this early stage. It also leads nicely into the next section and gives some flavour of the type of conversations taking place between shop-floor and the consultants at this point. It takes place between one of the consultants and a group of male operatives from the pharmaceutical production division.

H.K.: "What do you think about the whole idea of participating in this?"

OP1 : "All the gripes...and so on...there is adequate machinery here already. It's a grandiose idea - the old liberal idea - I think it's a load of old rubbish. There's enough machinery."

OP2 : "We're taking it off them...taking responsibility off them...those that should take the responsibility."

OP3 : "They're being a bit careful - looking to the future at the possibility of the unions getting in."

OP2 : "There's been talk about the unions in the past, then this thing started - is it coincidence?"

OP3 : "It's an early warning system I think. The unions used to sit around the gates."

OP4 : "Yeah - we used to get raises then."

OP5 : "If management don't want it to work, then it won't. The only thing I've heard from others involved here is that it's a waste of time."

H.K. : "Don't get us misrepresented - we sit on the fence. Participation need not conflict with unionism - you could still join the unions afterwards."

OP3 : "They're just trying to forestall the unions."

OP5 : "Why did they come to you - why didn't they just come to us and say 'we want to set up participation'."

H.K.: "I agree...management don't take the initiative."

OP1 : "This is lip-service. It's a dream of the liberal party and now the socialist party. Is this government-sponsored - are they paying lip service to the government?"

OP3 : "There's been a lot of talk about nationalising the pharmaceutical industry, they don't want to get anyone's back up."

OP1 : "This company is always quick to respond to government thinking."

This dialogue encapsulates a myriad of highly pertinent issues, some of which are beyond the scope of this section but which I hope to refer to later (or have already referred to). However, what is of immediate interest are the semi-technical references to participation. Here I am referring to those portions of the dialogue in which OP1 says:-

"It's a grandiose idea - the old liberal idea" and

"It's a dream of the liberal party and now the socialist party."

They represent another particular source of meanings associated with participation and illustrate a fairly sophisticated awareness of a sense of the historical and political background to the issue. The words 'grandiose' and 'dream' are fairly significant, particularly when they were said in a somewhat derisory fashion. Clearly participation in this instance has connotations of unrealistic utopia, a non-workable political ideology, or purely seen as political rhetoric. It is also obvious that the notion of participation is aligned with the liberal and labour ('socialist'?) parties and clearly not considered a part of the trade union movement (and by omission, nor to the Conser-

vative Party). The mention of government involvement is a further indication of some awareness of the general debate about industrial democracy.

There are various other meanings both explicit and inferential and connotational in the dialogue, but I shall consider those in conjunction with other more general, common language usages of participation in the next section. It is important to reiterate here that these articulations are untypical of the majority of the shop-floor membership. But they were articulated in this context and perhaps elsewhere in other conversations, to that extent they enter the text, their impact is at present undecidable.

Everyday Meanings

As already indicated, the majority of the shop-floor staff appeared to be unaware of the technical language uses of participation, or at least failed to make any specific reference to them. Their early conception of participation may have been largely confined then to its everyday usage associations. It should be noted, however, that the technical language uses may have indirectly become part of their conceptual apparatus by having been transposed from its technical referents and transformed into everyday language uses. So although most claim not to be aware of the technical uses of 'participation', the discussions with them and between them reveal that they have certain taken-for-granteds about what participation means. That is, they claim to be unfamiliar with the linguistic network and technical language uses associated with participation, and yet, in conversation they reveal that participation is capable of being put into meaningful relation, and that some of those relations are so entrenched in discourse that they are taken for granted.

Participation, then, was perhaps not a salient construct for the vast majority of people on the shop-floor. In these initial meetings, mention of the term failed to generate much specific response, and was often met with bemused looks. (Herein lies a partial criticism of those attitudinal survey approaches to participation exemplified perhaps by Holter, A. 1965 and by Hespe G. and Wall, T. 1976. Is it reasonable to assess people's attitudes to a phenomena that has little significance to them and more importantly about which they have a restricted set of meaning relations. A point cogently made by Bate, S.P. and Mangham, I.L. 1975 and 1981.) As indicated, a small minority were familiar with the term in some of its 'technical' uses, and were able to construct certain articulations on that basis. Many more, however, seemed initially unable to give voice to any conceptualisation that they may have held in any explicit, coherent fashion. They could not define the term, and seemed unable (or unwilling?) to locate it in any other form of discourse - especially any discourse that articulated their own working environment. For many the term appeared almost to represent a 'meaning vacuum'. It was almost like asking an Aborigine living somewhere near Alice Springs what he thought about snow!

However, one could barely imagine that the word 'participation' was a complete semantic lacunae for all members. It is, after all, a fairly common everyday English word with a variety of everyday uses and connotations. When pressed many individuals were able to explicate some views about what participation might mean, even if in very vague and general terms; as we shall see shortly.

Many of the expressed positions in relation to the existing situation, those grievances etc. presented in an earlier section, should be seen as a broader discourse against which any new talk about the work environment would be placed. Those discontents made

in relation to current work relations, conditions and structure would form a point of comparison for any proposed newness introduced, such as 'participation'. They may serve then as an indication of what it was hoped participation might do something to alleviate. They may also stand as an indication of what a non-participative regime is like.

Similarly the types of issues raised in these conversations are an indication of what areas participation may be supposed to impinge upon. From the outset certain types of issues were seen as relevant and legitimate, whilst others were spoken of as not rightly belonging in such an arena. Questions of relevancy and legitimacy were not only revealed inferentially from the conversations, but at times were explicitly expressed.

Perhaps because the concept was not immediately meaningful to them in a form they could readily articulate, many questions were asked about the proposed scheme. Analysis of such questions represents a further source of material that is revealing of some possible meanings. The nature of those questions are of interest. Many were concerned with pragmatic process and structure issues - how would the scheme operate? Who would be involved and in what way? How would issues be dealt with? What would be the format of the meetings? and so on. In asking such questions, certain assumptions are revealed and certain other possibilities implicitly excluded. That latter point represents another means of accessing meaning potentials present. Namely, by negative analysis - by examining what wasn't discussed, what wasn't raised, what wasn't countenanced. The conceptual parameters that are being established in their talk begins to be revealed.

So again, much of this section needs to be considered in

relation to that earlier descriptive section that stands as a flawed portrayal of a broader company culture. Since a good deal of these early discussions inevitably focused on members analysis of the current situation; their current grievances, 'beefs', dilemmas and so on. There seemed a compulsion to concretise any debate by reference to specific, extant, issues relating to conditions at work. Attempts to generate discussions in abstract terms, in terms of principles relating to working rights, or the philosophy behind participation or company policy, usually failed. Discussion invariably centred on issues of an immediate and concrete nature. The kinds of dialogue and comments documented in that section constituted the body of early debates and any of the implicit assumptions gleaned in this section were embodied in these dialogues. There are clearly a number of reasons why those issues should have arisen in those early discussions (e.g. the setting simply provided them with a chance 'to get it off their chests'). It is also apparent that the debate took the form that it did there, demonstrates that members clearly felt that participation was possibly something to do with the amelioration of these current grievances, or at the very least that participation had something to do with those kinds of concerns. They didn't, for instance, start talking about the housing conditions in Pencham or the morality of the modern pharmaceutical industry (which for some might appear relevant to a participation exercise); there was a particular range and scope to the issues debated in those early meetings. Since members knew that such discussions were related to something called a 'participation scheme' it is not too outlandish to suggest that those dialogues and comments represent 'talk' about participation; that the issues were seen as relevant and legitimate to a discussion around the general notion of participation. The sort of concerns presented in that section can be said to be a kind of relevancy nexus vis-a-vis the notion of participation.

Participation and Information. Out of that melee of concerns, that in a sense do serve to set some preliminary parameters around participation, can be drawn a number of more specific elements that are of more direct relevance here. For instance, there was some indication that participation might mean, for involved members, an increase in the degree and content of information made available to them. In view of the points made in the preceding paragraph, I would refer back to the previous section where I discuss and illustrate members disenchantment with current information provision. Coupled with the problem of information provision is the more general one of communication. It is not simply a matter of information not being adequately supplied by management, it is also the difficulty of having one's own voice heard, of the processes of communication, of the relationships between departments and hierarchical levels.

There was clearly some expectation that participation was something to do with information and communications. The majority saw it in terms of ensuring that management told them more about what was going on, put them more in the picture. They perceived it primarily as a possible way of improving, what they diagnosed as, very poor information provision and dire communications processes. Some others viewed it in a more positive vein. They expected participation to entail some type of 'sharing of information'. It was not merely a question of getting more out of management, a more positive, collaborative stance was adopted on occasion.

Participation, Recognition and Understanding. Another area in which shop-floor members seemed to hold out expectations for participation was in terms of the relationships with their superiors. How they were treated by their superiors, whether they felt they were properly understood, whether they could effectively express their views

to their superiors. The latter of these is clearly related to the preceding point so I will consider it first.

Again in section (2), I indicated quite clearly that the expression that they couldn't get their views across to the 'right' people, that issues they raised failed to progress or were squashed, was a major grievance. People spoke of this difficulty in relation to participation indicating that part of the meaning of participation for them was that it should provide a vehicle for them to communicate effectively with their superiors, that their views should get a fair airing and be taken notice of, that issues were not blocked at inappropriate points in the hierarchy:

Hamming: "Is there a genuine feeling among shop-floor workers that they want to participate more?"

Op: "There is a feeling that their views aren't taken up. If the section head doesn't agree with the problems and issues raised, it never goes any further.
We want our views to be taken notice of, it's not so much that we want more influence, more a matter of just being taken notice of."

Op: "We want management to understand better some of the general hassles that occur on the shop-floor."

SPB: "Do you ever have meetings with anyone?"

Op: "No."

Op: "We are isolated really."

Op: "It would be nice every couple of months just to have someone to talk to."

The above pieces of dialogue indicate that shop-floor personnel relate participation to, at a minimum, increased contact with the powers that be. The first interchange is particularly interesting

since the comments about wanting 'our views to be taken notice of' are made as a direct response to a question about participation. It is almost as if the respondent is defining participation in terms of the ability to express one's views openly and in the right quarter. Perhaps the most significant thing stemming from each of the above quotes is the low level of radicalism. This was a fairly common theme among the shop-floor. Participation was never viewed in any really radical form. It was never expressed in terms of workers control; members on the board of directors were never mentioned in even a half-serious way (although these are definitions available in academic and other discourses). Indeed the implied aspirations and meanings relating to participation among the shop-floor, and spectacularly highlighted in these three examples, are crushingly moderate. There is, of course, a semantic problem in the first quote. The person is making a distinction between having 'views taken notice of' and having 'more influence'. This lay conceptualisation of power relations poses some interpretative difficulties. It is fairly clear that 'more influence' is seen as, in some sense, the stronger of the two, the most radical. In what she goes on to say it is clear that she is advocating that issues should not be 'squashed'. But it is unclear whether she means that a fair hearing would be satisfactory or whether only the required action would be acceptable. In the absence of a concrete instance and away from the immediate turmoil, a 'fair-hearing' sounds equitable and is suggestive of a sufficient consideration of the issue. However, in an actual case, a 'fair-hearing' that is not followed by a required action begins to be interpreted as an instance of 'squashing' yet again. Rhetorically, being 'taken notice of' is less demanding, more moderate, more subservient than to have 'influence'. Both terms are vague unless contextualised or more closely defined, but I suggest being 'taken notice

of' contains the greater ambiguity. Having one's 'views taken notice of' is also the more passive expression. The choice of each phrasing in juxtaposition to 'more influence' is congruent with the oft expressed attitude of not wishing to take full responsibility in the work place. Once again, I have occasion to refer back to section (2) where documented are shop-floor views about management's natural prerogative and duty to take responsibility for decisions, and workers sense of not being obligated to be involved in decisions they are not contracted to make and are not being paid for, are expressed. 'More influence',in this instance, is suggestive of a more active role, a degree of involvement perceived as undesirable and/or illegitimate. It is a recurring virtual paradox that members complained bitterly about having their views squashed, of not being able to effectively communicate with the organisation's power sources whilst at the same time advocating an extremely moderate position in which active involvement in decision-making is avoided and there is a shying-away from taking responsibility for their own work affairs. The distinction made in this small sequence of dialogue encapsulates in strange logico-linguistic ways this inconsistent talk. Does 'being taken notice of' constitute 'influence', does a failure to 'be taken notice of' amount to 'squashing', does 'more influence' entail always being heard? Rhetorically the two expressions represent a poignant distinction.

The other two quotes presented are similarly extremely moderate in their aspirations. Both are representative of the traditionalist, almost reactionary attitude taken vis-a-vis participation. But they are more than that, they are an emotional plea. In this instance participation is perhaps seen as a straw to clutch at, a possible means to have people outside the immediate work environment under-

stand the real position, to listen to them, to recognise them as authentic human beings. The passivity implied here is extreme: to be understood, to be spoken to. The more usual conception of participation in terms of some form of bi-lateral involvement would be stretched to accommodate sensibly the aspirations expressed in these quotes. It is hardly distinguishable from a request for a gross form of parternalism and can only be seen as the very minimum for any participation system.

> "It used to be better before (before structural and personnel changes) with the managers. You were treated like a person then, we just feel like part of the furniture now."

Participation, the Organ-Grinder and his Monkeys. Another shop-floor expression about the possibilities of participation entailed the view that it may extend their sphere of contact. The general view was that a participation scheme may provide a means for the shop-floor to gain access to echelons of the organisational hierarchy that they felt they normally could not communicate with. This aspiration is linked with the documented view that issues were blocked at lower levels and never received consideration in the correct areas. Members felt that issues did not progress outside of their own department. There are a number of implications underlying that feeling. Firstly, that those who might reasonably be expected to be in a position to make a decision or take action do not hear of the problem. Secondly, that those within the department are being unnecessarily protectionist. Certain departmental grievances may be a source of embarrassment to certain supervisory or managerial levels within the department if they are exposed to those outside. Indeed, department managers, with constraints to run a 'tight ship' with a 'happy crew' can be expected to be very chary of any problem being displayed to potent-

ially critical eyes. Issue-raisers who fail to progress their problem are then in the position of being internally sanctioned with little hope of external appeal. The fear and frustration is perhaps a less severe version of the atmosphere pervading in Her Majesty's prisons. The inmate, generally, can only complain to those within the institution, but the complaints are invariably related to that institution and those within it. It is quite likely, therefore, that his complaining is going to be held within the institution, perceived as an affront to that institution and thus likely to rebound upon the instigator in an unpleasant fashion.

Members were of the opinion, then, that participation ought to provide a means for issues to progress to the right quarters, with the usual implicit caveat, that that meant, outside of the department.

Op: "It would be helpful to have someone who is outside the section, and unbiased ... such as (the managing director) who attends the Chemical Plant meetings. We won't get someone like that."

H.K.: "What sort of person would you want?"

Op: "We want a 50:50 arrangement, and then if there is a stalemate, be able to take the issue higher. It is often the case now, that even if a grievance is just, and is recognised as just by all concerned, we still get the argument, 'It's not company policy' thrown at us. The idea of someone like (the managing director) is useful."

Op: "If we had a 50:50 set-up then at least any disagreements would get out of the department, which is important for us."

H.K.: "You used to have meetings, didn't you?"

Op: "Yes, we had about three. The things we brought up were squashed. There is the problem that our grievances can be interpreted as in a sense being anti-production, so they don't like it."

As well as an attempt to escape the claustrophobia of one's immediate work environment, such comments also represent a clear recognition of the real power sources in the organisation. It's a version of "I want to talk to the organ grinder not his monkey'. The attitude is also a function of the arch-bureaucracy of such organisations. The organisation has a flattened-pyramid hierarchical structure with a multiplicity of levels. It further has a proliferation of formalised procedures relating to communication and decision-making. Individuals spoke a good deal about interminable buck-passing and the inordinate amount of time required for things to be processed by the system. Participation is thus visualised as a potential means of circumventing this quagmire.

The comments show, perhaps, a surprising faith in the supreme commanders. As one operative said in talking about the managing director, "If he knew what it was like down here, I'm sure he'd do something about it". Of course others did not share this enthusiasm. But there seemed to be some expectation that things would be improved, and appropriate action undertaken if only those with the real power in the organisation could be apprised of the true situation. Whether such faith would provide dividends is, of course, open to question but it is interesting to note the existence of such an attitude. It constitutes a virtual acceptance, even connivance with the paternalistic ethos of the place.

Participation means Action. Perhaps allied with the above point was the presence of an anticipation that participation ought to have something

to do with obtaining action on issues of concern. Many people clearly felt, and wanted, any participative system to provide decisions and action on issues raised. It was not simply seen by all as a forum for getting things off the chest, or an arena for an exchange of views, or a means whereby management could impart information. There was a clear expression among some sections of the workforce that appropriate action should be the aim and the outcome. Such a view is clearly linked with the expressed failure of extant mechanisms to provide a method in which the shop-floor could raise and issue and have rapid and effective action taken on it. All the comments recorded earlier about 'squashing', 'blockages' and 'filtering' are relevant here.

This attitude is both positive and negative at the same time. It is negative in the sense that the appeal is backward looking, action is alluded to by reference to the failure to attain it in the past. It is positive in the sense that it is a less passive view of participation than that expressed by other sections of the shop-floor. It is more positive, for instance, than merely 'being taken notice of'. It should be noted that such a pro-active approach is not exactly typical of the shop-floor as a whole. The dialogue below illustrates both these aspects:-

H.K.: "Do you think it would be a good idea to have meetings with other areas of the section?"

Op: "Only if any real action came of it, things we've said before have fallen on deaf ears. Even when we know about a job and make suggestions, they get squashed and no notice is taken. We feel we have no influence."

H.K.: "How about your relationship with production?"

Op: "The problems are with the arrangements our bosses make. We don't want something where we have meetings and they sit and listen and nothing is done."

H.K.: "You would be interested then if things actually get done?"

Op: "Yes, if you think anything constructive would come of it. We want something that will get some action - we don't want them to conveniently forget."

For some members, then, participation has an associated meaning of 'action'. This is quite clearly a very important meaning, and one that developed and became of greater concern as the scheme developed; as we shall see. Definitionally it is important since to define participation in terms of action is to place the notion in a particular frame. By expounding it in these terms, various alternative definitions become untenable to those proposing this definition. The range of expectations associated with action would not be fulfilled by any definition in terms of mere information sharing for example. It is also a very positive definition that places considerable constraint and responsibility on those whom they see as being in a position to take action. There is yet another side to this positive-negative dialectic. It is still negative to the extent that the implication is that others should take responsibility for action. The proposal is not 'participation means that we shall be in a position to take action', but, 'participation means that we should be in a position to get others to take the actions we require'. It is in this sense that the attitude here is closely linked with the last point where the view was expressed that participation should allow access to those with real power (outside the daily working environment). Once such access is established, those with such power will exert it in a 'correct' fashion that is of benefit to the shop-floor. So, although it represents a seemingly rather militant demand for action, it is a demand for action on the part of others and not a taking of action on their own behalf.

Co-operation and Members Knowledge. Others were of the opinion that participation entailed greater co-operation between management and workers:

> Hamming: "What sort of things would help?"
>
> Op: "Co-operation, we need more co-operation with management."

But such expressions were often attached to the more negative view that co-operation was required in order to restore a deteriorated existing situation. It was co-operation to avoid the evils of 'squashing', of ineffectiveness and so on. Again any positive approach to participation is initiated by a desire to rectify current grievances. However, occasionally individuals expressed genuine positive concerns. Some revealed that for them participation should entail a constructive approach to problems and issues. This is perhaps linked to the notion of getting action. But there is the added implication of both sides working together in a responsible and constructive fashion to solve each others, and mutual, problems. The normative overtones of such an attitude are taken further by some members who tended to see participation as a means of reducing feelings of "them-and-us". Particularly as the scheme developed, a number of representatives became increasingly concerned that the structure of the scheme seemed to perpetuate a "them-and-us" situation. Why were group meetings held on exclusively hierarchical lines? Why did the consultants meet groups of workers separately from their managers? There seemed some expectation that participation ought to attempt to make some inroads into such divisions. The image seemed to be one of a fully integrated "team", sharing common problems and mutually aiding the other to solve those problems.

Others took a more aggressive line on this issue. Whilst advocating a combined attack on mutually shared problems, they expressed it more assertively. The brunt of assertions centred on the shop-floors own perceived expertise, often with the corollary that management didn't always know what they were doing.

Op: "Often we have come in and then waited for an hour or so before they set us on - they don't seem to have things organised properly. Things seem very badly organised. If we can see the problems, why can't they? It's very frustrating."

Op: "When ****** (a chargehand) is in charge, things run beautifully. So we know it can be done. Why can't the others do it?"

Op: "Scheduling of work is a problem often. You can be given 5-6 jobs in about 10 minutes - it's just bad organisation. We often stand around for a long time before we are set on. There is something wrong in the office organisation."

Of course, it is a normal past-time to criticise the effectiveness of one's superiors, but the interest here is with the corollary that shop-floor personnel can help their superiors in a constructive way. The implications is; 'things go wrong which affect us because management don't organise properly or they don't have an intimate understanding of the daily nitty gritty of actual production. We, on the shop-floor by our routine involvement in production activities, have accumulated expertise that could be of assistance. If management were only to ask us, if they allowed us to contribute, many of the problems could be avoided or overcome'. Again the point is linked with a grievance 'We aren't listened to, our views aren't taken notice of.'

H.K.: "Do you have any consultations about plant acquisitions?"

Op: "No - the last machine we had, we didn't want it. We often know more about the job than they do. We keep on bringing up grievances and pointing out faults, but nothing seems to get done."

In one department (the laboratories) substantial alterations were being undertaken in the working area. Changes of layout, equipment, decoration and so on. Many members of the shop-floor complained to me that they were not consulted about any of these alterations. One change in particular caused a good deal of ironic laughter and some genuine resentment. It was proposed to change the decor, and several permutations of colour scheme were considered appropriate. The manager, as a concession to the workforce, decided to involve some members in the choice of colour scheme. Five 'old-stagers' (5 women who had worked in the department for a number of years, and who were well above the mean age for the department) were given cards showing the possible colours and asked to make a selection. Some time later at the manager's weekly meeting with his section heads and supervisors:-

Dept. Manager:
"In relation to the changes. One decision we've got to make is the sort of finishing we have on the walls. Now, I perhaps unwisely asked a few people their opinions. (he hands out samples of colour schemes and explains the preferences of those shop-floor members he consulted). As I should have guessed they all chose differently. Some of the colours they have chosen are too dark, aren't they?"

Section Head I:
"We want something fairly innocuous - especially if large areas are to be covered."

Section Head II:
"They didn't want it to look too clinical."

Supervisor:
"Well, it is a laboratory after all."

Section Head II:
"In true democratic fashion, let's ignore the rest." (laughter)

They then proceeded to discuss the colour scheme and a decision was made. A month later one of the supervisors chaired a regular meeting with the shop-floor members:-

Op: "Was a decision made on a colour scheme?"

Supervisor:
"Yes - that was a bit of a disaster - all the people given the opportunity to choose, chose something different."

Op: (irately) "Why weren't we asked?"

Op: "Why wasn't it discussed after those choices had been made."

Supervisor:
"Well, it was the last meeting before work began."

Op: "Well, that's just typical."

Op: "Why didn't they get us all together to discuss it?"

(A mass hubbub ensured in which individual contributions could not be distinguished.)

Supervisor:
"Anyway the one that was chosen was fairly neutral."

Shortly afterwards, I had discussions with members of the shop-floor. The issue was a source of annoyance, they had not been properly consulted about the alterations in their work area at all. When, on the fairly trivial issue of decoration, five 'old-stagers' were asked, even that was ignored.

R.I.W.: "Is that the sort of thing you feel you should be involved in?"

Op: "Yes."

Op: "Take the fume cupboards. One at present is faulty, it leaks. Really it's not a very good design. They are proposing to replace it. But they are replacing it with one of the same type. They didn't consult us about that."

Another member expressed great concern about the lack of consultation about the departmental alterations. She also furnished a further example of where shop-floor personnel have valuable expertise that is neglected by management:

Op: "There are other types of decisions we aren't involved in. For instance, I am in charge of a particular instrument down there. It was decided to put a new hood over it - they got a consultant in, he discussed it with **** and **** and **** (Dept. Manager and Section Heads). It was only afterwards when I made a point of speaking to the consultant that I was able to point out that if he did what he was intending to do, it wouldn't work. We work on these things, they ought to ask us."

By way of completing this little scenario, below are some comments made by one of the section heads in relation to this issue. He is commenting on the more general point about what participation might mean and mentions the decoration episode as part of his rhetoric of motive. He sees participation, he says, in terms of "seeking people's opinions and views which enable one to make a more informed decision". He goes on:-

"You know that decisions made by committees don't work. It's always too long-winded. Take the example of when we were choosing the colour scheme for the lab. We involved the workforce, five members were asked to choose the colours - and we got five completely different colour schemes. It's very difficult to get agreement."

The failure of the five to present a consensual colour scheme is interpreted by management as evidence of failure of participative exercises. It is also used as a rhetoric of motive to justify unilateral decisions. It also serves to reflexively reinforce the

view that involving shop-floor in those types of concerns is dysfunctional. The example is also employed by the supervisor to justify management's own choice of colour scheme, whilst at the same time it is utilised as a rhetoric to demonstrate the fairness and democratic nature of the management. The same example becomes an illustration for the shop-floor of management's incompetence. It is paraded as an ineffectual attempt to implement a consultative procedure. It also serves the dual purpose for the shop-floor of demonstrating management's authoritarian attitude and the consequent lack of involvement of members in vital affairs of their department.

It is interesting to note a similar incident in an administrative office in another department. Again, the work area was being redesigned and redecorated. I asked the female workers if they were consulted about the changes. They agreed that, to some extent, they were but pointed out that the final decision rested with management. Interestingly, in this case, the shop-floor members accepted this position by using the same justification provided by the section head in the other department. That is, <u>they</u> commented on the difficulty involved in getting 15 women to agree on a colour scheme. However, some recognised this as a trivial point and indicated that they would not be as prepared to accept unilateral decisions on other issues. In response to this, I put the following question:-

R.I.W.: "What about if they wanted to buy some new typewriters, would you want to be consulted on that?"

Op: "Oh yes - we've got to use them, haven't we?"

Members seemed to feel that in a more agreeable system (possibly participation?) they would expect to make a greater contribution. They felt they had particular knowledge and skills relating to their jobs that management often lacked, but that such skill and knowledge

was not called into use by management when it might sensibly have played a part in management's decisions. The view expressed is partially a straightforward criticism of management, it is partly a defensive ploy since many of the decisions made where they aren't consulted are seen as potentially troublesome for them in their daily work. It is also a genuinely constructive attitude and belief that if their skill and knowledge were properly utilised, things would run more smoothly. It is not only seen as a possible means of defending their own situation from potentially troublesome decisions, some also viewed it as a proper means of assisting the company to operate more effectively. The implications of some remarks are potentially far-reaching, even radical:-

H.K.: "Do you think you ought to have your ideas listened to with regard to things like new machines?"

Op: "Yes. We do get to know the jobs and the machines, perhaps things even the buyers don't know."

Hamming: "Do you ever discuss these issues?"

Op: "We never get a chance to."

The notion that the shop-floor frequently represents a wealth of, often, untapped knowledge and skill and that it should be properly harnessed for the benefit of all, is an oft quoted tenet of much of the prescriptive literature on the topic of participation (see for example Paul & Robertson (1970); Herzberg (1969). It is often proposed as a rhetoric to demonstrate to managerial staff some potential benefit to them of engaging in more participative regimens. Here is a source of wisdom and expertise on their very doorstep that, if properly mined, could greatly enhance managerial decision-making capabilities.

Structure, Process and Power - Participative Pragmatics. Many of the early concerns of the shop-floor centred on process and structure queries, and embedded in such concerns were an interest in the power relationships that might be involved in a participative scheme. Such substantive interests serve to reveal a number of assumptions and expectations vis-a-vis participation. The anxiety about power relations, centred structurally around the problem of power ratios, is of particular interest and will be dealt with shortly. First I shall attempt to examine some other process and structure concerns to see if they are revealing of any implicit meanings relating to participation. Quite naturally, when the notion of participation was first mooted, individuals were extremely concerned about what might be involved, how the thing would be conducted, its structural and processual characteristics. The point of interest here is that the nature of the questions and considerations concerning those characteristics may help to suggest some of the tacit assumptions and expectations individuals held about participation.

The most noticeable assumption in this regard, concerned meetings. There appeared to be an extremely pervasive assumption that participation would, in some way, involve meetings. It became a virtually unchallenged taken-for-granted. One can only speculate as to why such a supposition should be so prevalent. It may stem from the fact that meetings are such an ubiquitous feature of the organisation anyway. There also appeared to be some notion of the form such meetings might take. Mass department or site-wide meetings with all interested parties attending were not envisaged. It was commonly supposed that some representational process would be activated. The British democratic principle seemed to spring most readily to people's minds. In this respect, much concern was expressed as to how representatives

would materialise. Some suspected a nomination or appointment process with management selecting shop-floor personnel. Others expected democratic elections from the outset.

There was general concern about how any committee would be constituted, who would be on it, and particularly the proportion of management to shop-floor. There was also the often expressed wish, as already stated, for someone outside the department, preferably from top management, to be on the committee.

Other queries concerned such substantive features as, the availability of minutes, the timing of meetings, who would chair the meetings and so on. But two areas created the most concern, the nature and scope of issues perceived as being relevant, and concern about power relations within the committee. I shall consider the latter first.

Given the assumption of meetings, much anxiety centred on the power ratios that may develop. I have already illustrated this concern in an earlier section in which people were shown to desire and expect participation to progress grievances to the correct quarter. One way of ensuring this was to have a ratio of '50:50', management to shop-floor, with unresolved issues being passed on to higher bodies. People were afraid that on an unbalanced committee, especially with no one from outside the department present, issues would, yet again, be squashed by managerial staff. This was coupled with a fear of 'blackeyes' as it was graphically put on one occasion. That is, fear of recriminations and victimisation; people were afraid that they would be made to suffer for raising sensitive issues. Consideration of these issues indicates that shop-floor personnel see participation as pertaining ultimately to issues of power. It is a recognition of a division of power in the organisation and seeing participation as a partial redress to that imbalance. They appear to see things, at essence, in

confrontational form, with management likely to squash their issues. Participation is salvatory then, in that it provides structural and processual means to aid the shop-floor against the power of management. Initially, though, these means are rather naively and crudely perceived. Two important factors are identified by the shop-floor as a means of redressing the power balance. Firstly by sheer numbers, if they have enough members on the committee, at least equal to management, they see themselves as being in a strong position. Secondly, if consensus is not achieved in a 50:50 committee then the issue should proceed outside the department to a more powerful figure who will hopefully see the merits of the shop-floor case. There was talk of 'sides'; would their immediate supervisors be considered on their 'side', lined up against senior management. There was also talk of 'consensus' and the failure to obtain consensus. If on an issue agreement could not be obtained, what would happen to the issue? Some suspected that, despite any participative system, management would always have the final say. In any division on an issue, senior management would always have the power to 'veto' (a word actually coined by some members).

Words like, 'meeting', 'committee', 'veto', 'representation', 'minutes', 'chairman', were readily invoked by some sections of the workforce. They are essentially employing the same lexical code that managerial staff might be expected to use. By using such terms they seem to be predicting that participation would involve them being engaged in the same game that they see management involved in on a daily basis and from which they are normally excluded except at the periphery. There appeared to be an expectation that the structure and processes of a participation scheme would readily be subsumed within the general routine auspices of managerial activity. The very use of

such terms is perhaps an indication that the shop-floor were envisaging playing a manager's game: meetings and their linguistic and behavioural paraphenalia epitomising manager's activities qua managers. Other expressions are notable by their absence. The terms 'bargaining' or 'negotiation' were not employed at all, even though some members had caste the situation in a mould that was suggestive of the legitimate use of such words. Nor were words like 'openness', 'trust', 'sharing' used by members; certainly not in the initial phases.

Relevancy and Legitimacy. The relevancy and legitimacy of certain issues in relation to participation were revealed in the early discussions. Specific types of issues were debated and were clearly considered appropriate and within the scope of a participative exercise. Some of these issues, particularly those in the form of grievances, were outlined in an earlier section. Still others will be discussed subsequently as the development of the scheme is chartered. Therefore I propose to leave only some very general remarks here, illustrated with a few particular examples.

This issue of relevancy and legitimacy is of vital interest, since the early perception of such factors is likely to be influential on subsequent developments with the scheme and the emerging definitional process. The type of issues members envisaged as being correctly within the scope of participation is vital to perceived possibilities in the future, and the issue of constraints, both other and self-imposed on those possibles. Drawing boundaries around the scope of participation in the early stages may be seen as setting a pattern for subsequent development. Delineating the scope in terms of legitimacy and relevancy is quite obviously an important aspect of the definitional process as a whole.

The majority of issues raised by the shop-floor in these preliminary discussions were essentially grievance issues. Complaints about existing practices with regard to conditions of work, working relationships (especially the treatment of shop-floor personnel by line management) and the manner in which work was organised. Please note that these do not constitute separable, dependent issues. Many were essentially 'hygiene' type issues, the type of 'beef' one might expect in any working environment. A flavour of this type of issue is well documented in the earlier section.

More fundamental and potentially radical issues are clearly hinted at, or are embodied, at root, in these more concrete problems but were most often not alluded to directly. When the scope of participation was referred to more or less directly, there was a diversification of views. There were those, the majority, who took a fairly limited view. They were interested in being involved only in low level, localised concerns relating to their immediate working environment or their department. Some others, admittedly a relatively small minority, were interested in including much wider issues within the domain of participation. Some references to comments made at the time will serve to illustrate this division:-

H.K.: "What areas would you want more influence in?"

Op: "Local things - such as putting in new plant etc."

Op: "We would be concerned with minor issues, but not major."

The last comment was made in the context of a wider discussion about managerial responsibility. The line of the person making the comment, was that management were employed to make certain decisions on the important issues, they were being paid to take responsibility for such concerns. It was not the responsibility of shop-floor, they had no

place, nor desire to be involved in such things. This was a fairly common attitude amongst shop-floor members in the initial stages.

Interestingly another operative uses the same type of argument but delineates managements decision-making responsibilities in a middle range of a continuum, reserving the right to be involved in important non-production issues that crucially affect him:-

> Op: "I'm not interested in talking about machines - a lot of the problems are bad management - if I report a bad machine, then whether the manager fixes it or not is his problem not mine. What we really want to talk about is wages."

However this desire to discuss wages was definitely untypical, although there is a suspicion that management had attempted to rule out such topics subversively (subversive in relation to the consultants):-

> H.K.: "What sort of things would you want to talk about."
>
> Op: "Well, pay and things."
>
> Op: "That's out, that's out."
>
> H.K.: "Well, you can raise issues of pay and conditions."
>
> Op: "We were told that we couldn't."
>
> H.K.: "You have to be careful how you hear things."
>
> Op: "We ought to be able to talk about grading and pay scales and training. The niggling issues are always there, we can generally resolve them in the department."
>
> Op: "Yes, it's issues that can't be dealt with in the department that need tackling."

The latter is again a fairly untypical response. It must be said that a more frequent response to the question 'What sort of issues do you want to be more involved in?' was silence! Further probing on the question usually led to a concretised discussion relating to the specific, 'hygiene' problems already highlighted.

In conclusion a number of points need emphasising. Firstly, that the relations into which participation were put by the shop-floor were diverse and no homogenous view can be gleaned. Secondly, that much of what preceded represent untypical articulations - for the vast majority there was barely any coherent articulation of a meaning in relation to participation. Thirdly, that these conversations took place in a particular context and the articulations may have constructed for particular contextual purposes. But, and finally, these textures did enter the public domain, became part of the wider participation text - some relations reappeared subsequently, others were transformed by entering new relations, still others merely decomposed and died away. In each case they make some contribution to the overall definitional process.

CHAPTER 4

PRELIMINARY MEANINGS : MIDDLE-MANAGEMENT

Trying to assess the initial meanings held by management regarding participation held particular difficulties in my case. In the first instance, by the time of my involvement at the company, the majority of senior management, at least, had already been exposed to various manifest meanings of participation. The university consultants had established their contact some considerable time prior to my entering the scene. Their early contact with members of senior management precludes the possibility of assessing managers preliminary notions vis-a-vis participation, since management's conceptions by the time of my engagement are likely to have been heavily influenced by the provision of definitions by the consultants. Secondly, many of those members at that level of the organisation are likely to regard themselves as professionals and to expose themselves to professional publications and communications. Thus, we can expect that many read material produced by the B.I.M., I.P.M. and, conceivably, the C.B.I.; that they may have attended meetings, conferences, seminars at which the issues relating to participation were discussed. That they are likely to have encountered pertinent articles in such journals as "Management Today", "Personnel Management" and so forth. They may, more generally, be expected to retain a general interest in industrial and political news. To keep their eye on new trends and developments as reported in the 'serious' news media. Thus, one can speculate that there is likely to exist a higher level of awareness pertaining to the issues surrounding participation amongst this level than amongst the shop-floor personnel, irrespective of any formal involvement by their own company in such concerns.

Those members of senior management with whom I came into contact clearly possessed a conception of the 'technical' meanings of participation, albeit with disparate amounts of sophistication. Methodologically, the difficulty arises in attempting to divorce their own conceptions from any they may have inhabited through the consultants, or through certain of their peers who had had significant contact with the consultants. As we shall see, members of senior management did possess and propose discrete and specific definitions of participation that did not entirely match those proposed by the consultants. However, without witnessing earlier interactions between the two, it is impossible to discern the extent of the influence of one upon the other. Since I intend to deal in some detail with senior management's proffered, full-blown definitions of participation very shortly, I propose to forego any wildly speculative attempt to extrapolate backwards in any attempt to reveal any unsullied preliminary meanings that may have been associated with participation.

However, members of line management (production unit section heads and supervisors) are a different prospect altogether. Many had experienced no exposure to the provided definitions of the consultants; others only minimally, and then secondhand via their seniors. They may have become aware of certain manifest meanings via the organisational grapevine. In conversations with colleagues of the same organisational level or their superiors they may have encountered the word 'participation' in some lexical context and thus have obtained some preliminary definition of the concept.

The group of line managers involved certainly do not constitute a homogenous group in this regard. The degree of exposure to any manifest meanings associated with participation, both within the organisational context and outside it, would vary from individual to

individual. The network of colleague relationships would have an influence on the dissemination of opinion and information. Thus a section head who belongs to a network that includes a department manager whose director is closely involved in the general development of the scheme, may come to have a more informed understanding of the issues than a section head whose colleague network does not include such a contact. There would have been no point in my tracing such networks (at least in this regard) since by the time I had established the formation, the overall situation would have changed markedly. (For instance, there were formalised memos relating to participation distributed throughout the company soon after my involvement.)

To the extent that one can generalise about such a group, it can be stated that in the initial stages their knowledge and opinion vis-a-vis participation was more akin to those of the shop-floor members than to many of senior management. Thus the general comments made in the preceding section about shop-floor preliminary conceptions also apply, in large measure, to the middle-management group. That is, on the whole they appeared substantially unfamiliar with technical meanings and usages of 'participation'. It was not an issue that pre-occupied them or was in any way salient to the everyday interests. In a sense there appeared, overtly, to be the same meaning vacuum experienced by the shop-floor members. However, line management more readily manufactured an articulated view about participation when confronted with the issue. That is, they were less prepared to adopt the stance of ignorance, to baldly declare that the concept was, in essence, meaningless to them.

So, as with shop-floor members, despite much declared lack of preconceptions about participation and a stance of general disinterest, extended conversations with line management members were revealing of various everyday meanings associated with participation. That is, when

engaged in conversation relating to the issue, myriad relations around the term 'participation' became manifest. At the level of generality, much of these associated meanings can be seen as matching those propounded by shop-floor members. This is to be expected, since familiarity with technical usages was absent or minimal, hence any conceptualisations represent everyday or lay meanings of participation. I shall now examine some of these specific relations as revealed in an analysis of various conversations with members of middle-management.

Despite certain similarities between the relations realised by middle-management and the shop-floor, there were also some clear differences, which is again perhaps not surprising. Their position, their interests, their background and informational matrix differ in certain crucial ways from most shop-floor people, hence one can expect them to have a variable perspective over a range of issues. The similarity of meanings is attributable to both parties by virtue of them being members of a particular cultural milieux and a general language community, wherein the term 'participation' has certain everyday uses and meaning associations. The variance in meaning is accountable largely as a function of the differentiation in organisational position and role. This entails differences in social networks, reference groups, information sources and access; different interests, concerns and expectations; a different perspective at the level of the organisation. The type and nature of interactions engaged in and experienced by both parties would overlap but also significantly differ at the organisational level. So here, then, are some of the relations realised in middle-management articulations.

Fairness, Equity and Democracy

As we saw in the preceding section, notions of participation seem to generate a nexus of meanings covering the ideas of fairness, equity and democracy. Such a range of meanings does not stem from any dictionary definition; indeed, we would not really expect it to. There does seem to be a fairly broadly held consensus amongst the organisational members, at all levels, that participation has something to do with this other array of concepts.

It would appear that, despite the avowals that members had no conception of the 'technical' usages of participation, the notion, nonetheless, has a political connotation in its everyday meaning. The direct link: democracy-participation, and the solid grounding of 'democracy' in political discourse, seems rather concretely fixed in the habitual talk of members of the organisation. Is participation, then, a politically-oriented word? I feel that, in the broadest sense of political, participation is, for the majority of people, a political concept. However, the political orientation does not exhaust the everyday meaning associations of the term. One might suggest that, for a more complete understanding of the term, there now exists a requirement to trace the everyday meanings of the word democracy. This could embroil one in an infinite semantic regression however. I suggest that the established link between participation and democracy provides us with sufficient richness and insight for us to be more able to comprehend what certain members take participation to mean. In any case, some further evidence for the connection and its semantic dimensions is provided in subsequent sub-sections when dealing with such identified elements as 'representation', 'meetings' and 'issues of power'.

It would appear, then, that there exists among some members an expectation that a participatory system should conform to some of the basic principles of democratic philosophy. More than that, that any such scheme in the context of their organisation would be expected to shift the organisational philosophy and practices of the place in the direction of greater adherence to democratic principles. I am not suggesting here that individual members, in baldly establishing the link between participation and democracy, were necessarily interested in pursuing such a line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, and elaborating the implications of such a link for organisational practices. The fact that such a link is made manifest, whatever the manifold reasons for its being so, is of interest in its own right, irrespective of the consequences and implications of such an established relation. However, the implications are of great importance subsequently if such meaning associations are retained and held as a yardstick against the scheme's progress. If a participatory scheme is conceived of in democratic terms, then, in all likelihood that will become an expectation or a requirement. People holding such an expectation will evaluate any attempted participation scheme in that light; unless, of course, their definition can be altered, or becomes altered.

Fairness and equity were also present items, either directly syntagmatically related to democracy, or as part of the nexus of which democracy is but one of the series. As the former they constitute a requirement of a system that proposes itself as democratic. Thus, if an organisational process is to be participatory it is also to be democratic, and if it is to be democratic then it must evince characteristics of fairness and equity. As the latter, a participatory scheme should be seen as introducing fairness and equity, irrespective of whether it is also overtly democratic or not.

The developmental aspect is extremely important. There is a sense in which members are constantly referring future possible alternative states to the immediate past and contemporary situation. Consequently, there is an unavoidable tendency to compare any proposed scheme or notion to what already exists in their working experience. Such comparison colours any comments they make in relation to participation. Thus members see participation in terms of a change in current circumstances. However that current situation is perceived, (and we have some idea from earlier chapters) participation is seen as a means of altering that position. There is an expectation of change per se. In the context of this section there is an expectation of change towards greater democracy, equity and fairness. A new system of organisational processes would be expected to demonstrate levels of fairness that are in advance of some common-denominator, probably the existing situation.

These three notions, and other related ones, refer both to a change in the general circumstances of working experience, but more particularly to the actual processes involved in a participative scheme. For instance, a number of comments were made about the arrangements for representation. Members displayed concern that each section of the department should have an equal chance and degree of representation. That, to be 'fair' to all groups working in the area, representation should reflect the opinions of all those groups. For the system to be 'fair', each group (however defined) should have adequate (however evaluated) representation. Also in relation to issues raised: issues should be given a 'fair' hearing and action taken should be seen as 'fair' and equitable to the parties concerned.

These comments clearly do not only apply to the members of middle-management. The general notions of equity, democracy and fairness, were raised by some individuals in each of the organisational

levels. I suspect that very few would take a line that denied the links between the notion of participation and this agglomerate of relationships. Many, however, would not see them as the salient issue, and others may question positive-negative scaling of such associations, particularly when considered in relation to other issues and philosophies of organisational processes. Their lack of salience for many is revealed by the fact that these concerns never arose in discussion with large numbers of members. The questions surrounding this range of meanings never appeared in the debate. That such views may be taken as negative developments is evidenced by the overtly authoritarian stance adopted by some members of management.

Such meanings, once again represent part of a disparate range held by varying organisational groups and individuals. Once more displaying the heterogeniety of definitions pervading the organisation in these early stages.

A final note: it was equity that appeared not equality - an important distinction. There was no talk (or very little) of equal power, equal influence, etc.

Representation

This section may have logically been subsumed within the preceding one, but it was so readily taken for granted as a necessary component of participation that it stood out strong and sharp as a significant relation in its own right.

The rapidity and ingenuousness with which representation was adopted as an inevitable corallary of participation was a cause of surprise to me. There seemed to be little or not hesitation on the part of the majority of members in coming to expect that a form of

representation would feature heavily in the scheme. By the same token, barely any alternative was countenanced. If individuals did not already articulate it in their own talk, they very readily accepted the principle when it was mooted. The notion, of course, was introduced quite early and heavily by the consultants, but people's acceptance of it was phenomenally straightforward. Not once was the relation challenged or an alternative proposed. When it was raised in the preliminary meetings, members reacted without an iota of surprise. They rapidly, and easily, entered into a discussion of structural arrangements to deal with representation. There was never a hiccough in the dialogue when the notion arose. Members appeared to have a tacit assumption that representation was the formalisation of a participative structure.

One could clearly speculate at great length as to why such an association should so readily be taken for granted. However, it seems clear that this meaning is connected with those of the last section. It is obviously not incidental that our broader democratic structures are founded on representational principles. If, as already suggested, participation has an obvious political connotation in people's discourse, it is hardly surprising that they should transpose notions from the wider political arena into this particular situation. So that, if participation has something to do with democracy, it, by fiat, has something to do with representational structures.

The point is also further connected with the preceding one, in that representation is traditionally and culturally seen as a structural means of attaining degrees of equity and fairness. Since our formal democratic systems in this country entail representation, then the symbolism that culturally and habitually inheres to democracy applies to systems of representation. Within our democracy we are bombarded with symbols of equity, liberty, egalitarianism and fairness.

Such entrenched symbols become extremely forceful and their connectedness tends to extend into various situations. Thus notions of representation tend also to connote fairness and equity. This works both ways; not only did members see representation as an obvious and legitimate means of achieving fairness etc. vis-a-vis issues, they also indicated that representation was itself a structural means of being fair. Concern was expressed that all pertinent sections of the workforce be adequately and 'fairly' represented. For instance, one section head quite vehemently pressed, with his group (i.e. other section heads and equivalents), to be properly represented. Part of the rationale for such demands is less noble than perhaps I have so far suggested. Part of what is being indexed here is that proportional representation would act protectively in any potential conflict. There was certainly an element of fear of being 'outnumbered' by other groups if representation was not equitably arranged. The section head in question felt that his level, his group, were liable to come under attack, from shop-floor members and possibly from the other direction as well, he therefore felt it to be most important that the group have sufficient strength through representation to defend themselves and to put their case adequately.

Meetings

There existed a further taken-for-granted amongst this managerial level that again mirrors the talk of shop-floor members. Members of middle-management quite clearly held meetings, of some form, to be an obvious corollary of a participative system. Such a view, clearly goes hand-in-hand with the preceding point. And again, if members did not already hold such a view manifestly, they displayed an amazing

propensity to accept the notion once introduced. Meetings were taken to be a quite natural part of any such participative system; the idea was never challenged or alternatives promulgated. There was some debate over the form such meetings should take; their constitution, size and so on. However, when this relation is associated with the former, the scope for meeting format is further limited. Members were not considering any old meeting, they had it further delimited already in their talk. Meetings would be representational - involving certain organisational levels - would be of a certain size and form. The exact parameters in each individual case are not really traceable. Subsequent events and the tacit acceptance of them, are perhaps more revealing of the notions people were dealing with at this time in relation to meetings. For the present, it is enough to point out that 'meetings' (whatever that meant for individual members) was a taken-for-granted meaning associated with participation for the majority of middle-management.

Communication and Information

Many members of line management quite obviously saw participation as being associated with aspects of organisational communications and the provision of information. The essence of this associated meaning is that a participative system should treat of the organisation's communications system and information processes. It is part of this meaning that the relationship be positive. That is, that participation should somehow improve communications and the provision of information. In a sense there is a larger, separate category of meaning implied here, "participation is supposed to improve things". I have already mentioned in passing that it has connotations of change,

and change in the direction of positive, beneficial developments. This general meaning is displayed in another form here. For most members at this level, participation not only involves communication and information, it involves perceptible improvements of same.

> Line Manager: "I see it as a means of improving communications - to provide information for members, not just on local things but of a varied nature.
> I also want to see it in terms of a forum to get some feedback not so much as a place to receive grievances."
>
> "The purpose of such meetings is two-fold: for me to get some kind of feedback from the floor on general points. And secondly, to provide information about what's going on in the company generally."
>
> Line Manager: "I think it's important that they (shop-floor members) are fully informed."
>
> Line Manager: "I see my job getting easier. In the past I've spent ages and ages talking to people, explaining what's going on. With this, things should get right down to everybody. It's difficult, you know, making sure people know about things, it takes a lot of my time; this should help a lot."

The latter two quotes are interesting, and quite representative of this group. When managerial members consider participation as a means of improving communication and information systems, they most often conceive of it unilaterally. The perceived improvement is one-sided: they can, thereby, more easily communicate, and disperse information to shop-floor members. However, a proportion, like the first quoted here, were prepared to see it bilaterally.

It is in this area, of communication and information, that most of line management, initially, held participation to be relevant. Participation for them, if it meant anything positive,meant first and foremost a means of coping more effectively with organisational communications. For many, this appeared to exhaust the substantive potential

of any such enterprise. It is in this sphere of organisational processes that participation is perceived as relevant and appropriate, and this sphere almost exclusively. One can perhaps interpret this as a less radical conception of participation contrasted with those that entail alterations in degrees of incluence, and still more radically, formal power-sharing.

Co-operation and Integration

These two terms, in some instances used synonymously, are also both put into syntagmatic relation to participation. In some senses they also connect with the preceding relations, that is they are spoken of as a corollary of improved communication. Participation, then, is made to associate with co-operation and integration.

It will be recalled from an earlier section that the shop-floor particularly, had complained about feelings of isolation, about there being no sense of belonging to the same organisation or even the same department. Some line managers were clearly aware of that and even experienced it from within their own positions in the organisation. But perhaps this relation indexes something else also. It indexes a search (or a presentation) on the part of line managers for some positive features of participation. It is related again to the association between participation and change. Thus, participation is again related to the possibility of a change for the better. In particular a change in the relationships between organisational members and between sections and departments. In some senses it is providing the suggestion that participation might ease the position of line management. Especially so since co-ordination and integration are part of the more formal requirements of line managers. Some members actually put it in those terms -

albeit with some 'call-your-bluff' bravado - 'participation will make my job easier'.

In other ways the relation is a purer reflection of the same sense of isolation experienced by the shop-floor. Line management too complained about their lack of inclusion in affairs just beyond their immediate responsibilities. Their own relations with their superiors were in some quarters spoken of in the same way that shop-floor members spoke of their relationship with line management. Although it was a long slow process before line management attempted to engage their superiors via the auspices of participation; a long time, indeed, before they approached the scheme proactively at all.

Participation here is meant to reside with an arrangement that includes a 'coming together', an increase in a shared and common approach to shared and common difficulties. It indexes an aspired to unitarist conception of organisational life. People can, and should be, co-operative; combined effort is firstly,more effective and secondly, more pleasant. Line management want to define participation in ways that give it the possibility of reducing the tension and potential conflict between them and their subordinates and also between them and their supervisors.

Power Issues

Again, in similar fashion to shop-floor members, some members of middle-management expressed concern over the potential implications of a participation scheme for issues of power and relations of power. It was a less overtly pronounced concern amongst this group although I am inclined to the opinion that members of the middle-management group were simply rather mute on the issue. There appeared to be rather more

tension and anxiety in this regard than was given concrete expression. However, certain members did seem aware that participation could be expected to have some bearing on relationships in the organisation and the power-ratios inherent in those relationships. There was also a recognition that those power-relations are a hard-faced reality and unlikely to dissolve readily. If I can briefly illustrate some of these points by reference to the data.

One section head, at a preliminary meeting, was rather cynically questioning the validity of an existing operating participative group (in the chemical plant). He was pressing people to provide concrete examples of achievements and being highly sceptical about what was presented. The consultant attempted to allay these suspicions and introduce an element of non-utopian realism by saying:

H.K. "You can't get ready decisions on all issues"

To which the section head retorted:

L.M. "So, we are only dealing with low level issues. If we can't get to the Managing Director, if we can't get him to do things - what can we do. If things get that far and there is no solution, what's left?"

H.K. "Well there are a lot of issues below that sort of level that can be dealt with. But we must remember, organisations are like that - there are always bosses for bosses, even Managing Directors."

A second member of the group took up the issue and rather graphically indicated the dilemma. How can a section head, or supervisor raise issues that are challenging to his immediate superior? What sort of comeback could they expect? And secondly, if the issue preceded past that point to, what for them effectively was, the head of the organisation, and still no satisfactory recourse was made, what sort of position would the person who raised the issue then be in?

The same person whom I have already quoted raised a second interesting dilemma, as he saw it. At a meeting of line management from a department where a participative system had already been established with line management from a department where it was being proposed, the issue of representation for this organisational level entered the conversation.

L.M.1 "But this is difficult. Who do we represent ... ourselves?"

L.M.2 "You have to represent your members."

L.M.3 "Just me and Geoff?"

L.M.1 "You (addressed to his equivalent from the experienced department) were just on your own, were you?"

L.M.4 "Yes, I just represented one level, so I represented myself. But when it develops and grows, I will have someone represent me."

L.M.1 "But I implement management policies. Things may be brought up at the meetings that are not going to work out .. as far as company policy is concerned, even though you personally may agree with it.

Say someone comes and says, 'let's finish at 3.30', as an individual I might agree, but obviously as a representative of the company, I won't agree."

H.K. "All you can really do, Cyril, is represent individual opinions, you represent each individual concerned, you can also express your own."

L.M.1 "Ah, but you can have two attitudes then, one for the company, company opinions, and your own."

L.M.2 "I represent three other people, sometimes I didn't agree but you have to put your view <u>and</u> theirs."

It is worth noting in passing that the above also re-emphasises the ready acceptance of the principle of representation. For the purposes of this section however, the quoted passage clearly indicates that certain

members of middle-management expected participation to have some bearing upon the established power relations and dynamics of the organisation, although there was some scepticism about whether such factors could be influenced positively by the introduction of such a scheme. There is expressed concern about the relationship in both directions, both upwards to superordinates and downwards to subordinates. Together with an awareness of the difficulty of being placed in the middle.

One can also detect an element of anxiety related to things becoming formalised and public. In a sense a member of middle-management is already in this ambiguous, fence-straddling position. The concerns seem to emanate from a fear of having that position publically and formally exposed, and of middle managers being placed in the position of publicly and formally declaring a stance vis-a-vis an issue that might be revealing of their dual allegiences.

To reiterate the general point. There existed among this group some feeling that participation could be expected to have some bearing upon power issues and authority relations with the company. Essentially, that participation would entail some changes in the nature of these relationships and that it would engender fresh problems and possibilities in relation to issues of power.

Managerial Passivity and Shop-floor Aggression

For members of middle-management at this preliminary stage, participation seemed to mean that the shop-floor members would bombard the higher levels with issues, grievances and problems, and that it was the role of management to respond to such things in an appropriate manner. It was seen very much as a one-way affair with the shop-floor taking an activist stance and management passively responding. One could discern an attitude, initially, that any such scheme was, in some

sense, for the shop-floor and not really for management. It was the provision of a means for the shop-floor to present issues that were of concern to them. Middle-management did not perceive it as a vehicle for them to actively pursue their interests.

In some senses this meaning is contradictory with the notions of co-operation and information dispersal outlined previously. However, the logical implications of these associations are not really relevant here. Middle managers can espouse views of co-operation and information provision as well as adopting a stance of passivity, in their definition of participation without regard for an internal consistency in such views. Provided such apparent paradoxes are not forced into the public arena as being such, then for the practical purposes of the contexts in which such connections are made such statements 'pass' and are acceptable. Secondly, information provision, communication and co-operation are not necessarily incompatible with notions of managerial passivity, when that passivity is in relation to concrete issues and grievances. Indeed a manager might reasonably claim he is fostering co-operation by allowing grievances to be submitted to him and by his perceived attempt to deal with them. Thirdly, it must again be re-emphasised that this group, like the others, do not represent an homogenous group, at least not to the degree that participation meant the same to all members.

There is clearly an element of anxiety and defensiveness attached to this point. Some management clearly expected a rather vigorous attack from the shop-floor if a participation scheme were to legitimise such a thing. They were often rather wary, expecting a certain amount of vitriolic, and for themselves to be put on the defensive. Others felt less threatened and merely took a rather paternalistic, benign posture, simply seeing participation as a vehicle for shop-floor maladies that management could be apprised of and thereby treat. There

was little conception, in this view, of shop-floor representatives being in a position to be actively involved in the decisions relating to the grievances, little conception of influence or power sharing. In this case, the shop-floor was seen then as passive, they aggressively promoted the issues but it was the job of management to then deal with those issues and take the requisite action. They cast themselves in the role of responders. They failed to see any scope within a participation scheme for them to initiate a course of action, for them to air their grievances, or for them to pursue their interests. Some of those associated notions of anxiety and defensiveness will be dealt with shortly.

There is a sense in which certain members of middle-management took this point a step further, and viewed the thing in confrontational terms. The feeling of shop-floor aggression, together with their own defensiveness seemed to generate an image that entailed an inevitable confrontation between management and the shop-floor. There was some expectation that shop-floor representatives would come in thumping the table and making demands. Perhaps, hidden here, is a stereotypical view of trade union negotiations and broader industrial relations issues. The pervasiveness of a conflict-frame for industrial relations is perhaps extensive. To illustrate the point I would refer to some conversations with line managers in a given department. Elections for shop-floor representatives had taken place and the managers came to discuss the results. When it was revealed that a certain person had been elected from one group, the department manager responded with a good deal of surprise:-

Dept. Manager:

"Really! He's the quiet chap, isn't he? He's the easiest one to please - I would have thought someone like Terry."

Section Head:

"Oh I don't know, he's the worst one in the group when he gets going, you don't hear him over there."

The manager clearly expected the shop-floor to nominate a vociferous, strong-willed character, not a 'quiet chap'. The comment 'He's the easiest one to please', reinforces some of the points I have been making. There is the obvious implication that the manager was not expecting an easy ride, that he expected to be in a position in which he would have to placate the shop-floor. There is also the implication that management would be responding to shop-floor initiatives, that they would be in the position of responding to shop-floor demands. The section heads' response is interesting, since the 'Terry' referred to, is a vociferous, strong-willed character, furthermore he is articulate and intelligent; a figure that the departmental management might have had difficulty coping with in a confrontational format. So, although they expected such a man to be elected, there was some relief that he was not.

Anxiety, Defensiveness and the Loss of Prerogative

Much of middle-management talk indexed these three, even if they were not always expressly and openly articulated. They at least indirectly indicate what participation meant to them at that time. I take much of that conception to relate to a notion that participation would mean the loss of some of the traditional managerial prerogative.

Again here we can see that participation meant change. It meant change in the nature of working relationships, in the organisational hierarchy, in the power structure. There was an expression that partici-

pation might entail a change in the traditional rights and powers of middle-management. This is not a point I want to stress, since many managers were rather more complacent and confident that this implies. Others, however, clearly felt such changes to be a likely correlate of a participative scheme, and for some this was a cause for concern. Methodologically there is a problem since line management would not wish to be seen to be overtly afraid of such changes. The machismo of power mitigates against expressions of fear and anxiety. There is an implied loss of face in admitting to such in the company of one's peers. The complacency and smugness of certain managers might then mask feelings of insecurity. However, others were unable, or unwilling, to swathe their concern and occasional emotionally charged outbursts revealed the anxiety. For example, in a meeting between the consultants and two groups of line management, one from a department already involved in the scheme and one about to be, the following pieces of conversation were recorded:-

S.1 "How much defence work do I have to do?'

H.K. "What do you mean?"

S.1 "Well, if people say "**** you keep moving me around" (an issue of concern to the shop-floor) - I have to defend myself."

H.K. "This is not going to be raised at the personal level - it may be threatening sometimes but ...."

S.1 "How do you, Tom, defend yourself?" (Tom is a supervisor from the department already involved)

S.2 "Well, in the first few meetings we had to defend - we lost a lot of ground - at least we seemed to. We were used to making decisions without being questioned - with this, we were upset at first, but gradually we began to see the value of it, we got used to explaining our decisions."

S.2 "We used to move people from shift to shift, it was a unilateral decision. This issue was raised very early on. We had a lot of discussion about it. We decided that, in future, if a person is moved from shift to shift reasons must be given - still a person can say "no" ultimately - you can't do anything about that."

S.1 "Well, don't you think you've lost something - you now can't do your job properly."

H.K. "An important point in a change of style is the giving of reasons."

S.1 (getting rather heated) "But you can't do your job if people say they don't want to do things, and just don't, they just please themselves. What about our system - they may just refuse to move, what the hell do we do then?"

Later in the same meeting *** becomes very concerned to discover the sort of issues the other members are encountering from their shop-floor, he appears very worried. Quite suddenly, he bursts, and a good deal of pent-up frustration and anxiety spills out:-

S.1 "I'm paid to do a job of work - why should I explain and answer to everybody else - I've got a job description that says what I do. Why should the girls question me?"

Section Head
"I was saying just the same things that you are now **** I got very angry - I thought 'why are they allowed to question me like that."

There was some mention then by the consultant about participation being a two-way thing, that line managers have issues too, that they can pursue their own interests via participation, again *** bursts out:-

S.1 "There's a lot of people higher up got to give us a bloody lot."

And a little later:-

S.3 "You will feel depressed - at first."

S.1 "Everyone else will then - why should we, there's no reason - why should we?"

Few managerial members expressed their concern quite so vehemently and passionately as this supervisor, although I got the impression that he was giving voice to views that some others felt it more expedient to leave unsaid. His malaise is perhaps a rather unspecified, generalised disquiet, unfocussed and not concretely articulable: a sort of non-specific anxiety. He clearly feels, though, that his authority will be undermined, that the slim degree of control he exerts through the legitimacy of his power position would be eroded. The comfort of the order provided by the status quo and his job description are being rattled beneath him. He sees the settled and established hierarchical structures teetering like a Dalian elephant. He is afraid of losing something, something that currently buffets him from a malignant horde of shop-floor members. He must defend himself, be prepared; be forewarned. Participation for him, on this conception is not fair and equitable; it's an unjust, and intolerable slipping and sliding into chaos and anarchy, with him and those like him bearing the brunt of the pogrom. This supervisor seeks safety in formality and the traditions he is used to, 'I'm paid to do a job of work', 'I've got a job description that says what I do'. Finally his frustration and anger reach such a level that, like the proverbial cornered rat, he lashes out at all around him; like that mysterious phenomena of contemporary metropolitan America, the gun-crazed-psychopathic-sniper, who 'takes a few with him', as society guns him down. But in his last expression there is more a feeling of hopelessness than defiance: the twice repeated "why should we" is poignant rather than assertive.

The vitriolic represents a reaction that others revealed more covertly. Others did express concern about the potential aggression of the shop-floor, the feeling that they and the positions

they filled would be exposed and under threat. That the nature of the power relations may alter, and alter unfavourably. Participation might mean an erosion of managerial prerogative, might mean a need to defend oneself; might mean a change in the established order of might and right.

Detractions and Disparagements

As is to be expected, perhaps, certain of the middle-management membership had rather negative meanings associated with the notion of participation. Some of the more emotional manifestations of this negative outlook have been explored in the preceding section. In this section I want to describe how certain members sought, with varying degrees of subtlety, to 'pour cold water' on the idea, to diffuse it or in other ways to indicate their scepticism in relation to the projected scheme. I take many of the things outlined in this section to be delivered strategically. But here they are presented merely as further elements in the conglomeration of meanings surrounding participation in these preliminary stages.

Some members quite simply suggested that it would not work. Quite what 'not work' entails was not often sufficiently clarified. Although there were two distinct senses in which 'won't work' was provided with a rationale. The first relates to an oft repeated almost cliched criticism of attempts to structure things democratically, namely that it becomes unmanageable. To expect an amorphous group of individuals with diverse backgrounds, capabilities and interests, to sensibly discuss and consensually solve various problems is idealistic. In practice, decisions made by such means are ineffectual. More importantly, to arrive at a decision at all is often tortuous and

unnecessarily time consuming. As one section head put it "decisions made by a committee don't work". The old adage that relates the tale of the horse designed by a committee and came up with the much maligned camel, might have been brought up in this regard.

The second refers back to the analysis of the existing situation, outlined earlier. The opinion expressed there that things had been tried in the past and nothing had been achieved. The general intransigence of senior management to issues raised by the shop-floor. A feeling that things would not change unless senior management wanted them to. A rather pervasive feeling that the status quo had possessed a facticity and permanence that was immutable. The shop-floor members were more vociferous in this respect, but this sense of having 'given up' had percolated through to middle-management to a limited extent.

Some members implicitly questioned the value and legitimacy of a participation scheme by suggesting that any such development would be a waste of time. In some senses this point relates to the one immediately preceding. A waste of time, in the sense that things would not change; they had not before, why should they now. However, it was also conceived as a waste of time in the sense of being unnecessary and/or inappropriate. As one member of middle-management put it:-

> "It might be a waste of time, all those meetings (as if we need any more), there might be nothing to talk about."

The strategic implications of such a statement are readily obvious. The speaker is trying to suggest that participation might be redundant and rather futile. Time spent in endless meetings with little of consequence to discuss might be more usefully spent. The wording, and the tone of delivery, suggest that he had a particular view of what a participation meeting might be like. He seems to be implying that such

a scheme would not have anything of vital moment to debate. By implication he is further indicating that participation would not offer a means for him to pursue interests of concern to himself and his peers. There was a more general interpretation of participation (or at best individuals attempted to foster the impression) as being rather unimportant, a rather trivial little conceit that would not address issues of substantial relevance and importance. It certainly would not make a great deal of difference to the day-to-day affairs of middle-management. There was often the allusion to things going on, that in the context of wider organisational affairs and the inevitable and traditional structures and practices of the work process, something like participation was not of overriding significance. This was particularly apparent since many of middle-management were very production oriented. Work and organisational business was defined in terms of production; a participation scheme that dealt with, essentially, non-production issues, was thus, in a sense, peripheral.

Two other disparaging interpretations were provided by middle-management, in relation to the proposal of participation, that essentially sought to define and delimit its significance. Some members promoted the notion that participation already existed in the company, the obvious corollary being that the current enterprise was superfluous. Others again (although there isn't mutual exclusivity here) maintained that participation was not a panacea.

Here it is difficult to differentiate between strategy and honest perception. Certainly, some members of middle-management actually expressed the view that participation already existed in the company. Whether one interprets this as a purely strategic ploy to diffuse the situation or to reveal themselves in a good light, or whether it was a sincerely held interpretation is clearly problematical, and must

inevitably remain so (of course, in a sense the honesty or otherwise of the presentation is irrelevent, these linguistic arrangements become manifest and entered the public discourse around participation, became part of the text of participation). If it is an honestly held view, then it is very revealing of certain member's definitions of participation at this point in time. In relation to the picture of the organisation painted in an earlier section, it represents a peculiar view of participation. Referring back to that section, it is difficult to conceive of any interpretation, however broad, that would allow for the label of participation to be affixed to the working processes and relationships there outlined. One can only infer that such proponents are alluding to any informal association between subordinate and superordinate or to any formal or informal sharing of information. If this is so, then it stands in stark contrast to the definitions of participation presented already in this section which involve the elements of representation, of formalised meetings and so on.

The second view, that participation is not a panacea, is also interpretable as strategic, but must also be seen as a valid and important definition. Such a view is clearly linked to the preceding points about it being a waste of time and regarding the feeling that the important things would proceed regardless of the introduction of any participation scheme. From a more positive viewpoint, members are interpreting the scheme realistically, it clearly,for them, will not solve all the problems in the organisation, not even the problems relating to relationships and hierarchical difficulties. Others felt that it was not a panacea in that it was an inappropriate solution in some situations. As one department manager put it:-

"It is also apparent that some members are happier with a strong leadership. *******, for instance, he's quite well respected by his men, and he gets things done - but he runs that department like a military operation."

Coincidentally, certain members, perhaps in view of the above points, sought to define participation in ways which would limit its scope. If participation is not a panacea for organisational ills, then clearly there are certain areas where it is not seen as valuable and which therefore should be beyond its sphere of influence. Others were concerned that participation should not intrude too fundamentally into their normal areas of authority. There was clearly some fear that participation would involve a necessary diminishing of the traditional authority of middle-management. The loss of power seen as flowing from that position to those of the shop-floor.

Significantly, others felt that certain issues were not legitimate for a participation scheme by virtue of them being treatable within existing structures (a version of 'it already exists'), or that they were seen as not being of sufficient significance.

Section Head:
"Is it going to turn into merely a platform for grievances? We don't really want that - there are some things that shouldn't be brought up at the meetings."

Members were clearly attempting to rule certain things out of court before they even became a possibility. The reasons for so doing are not at all universal. Some take a protectionist stance; certain issues if available for public debate would undermine the legitimated authority of middle-management, or would at least provide possible grounds for embarrassment to those members. Others adopted a stance of genuine concern that participation should only deal with issues of real significance and relevance. The notions of significance and relevance, however, were left mostly unspecified. Members seemed to be

of the opinion that simple grievances relating, say, to working conditions, were not of appropriate significance for participation. However, they failed to spell out the kind of issues that they would accept as being appropriate.

Improvement Potential

Having considered above some of the rather negative meanings placed upon participation by members of middle-management, it is as well now to consider some of the more positive meanings to balance and to further indicate the heterogeneity of meanings held at this time.

I have already indicated that there existed an implicit feeling that participation would improve things in some general and diffuse fashion. In this section I shall deal with three concrete manifestations of this feeling. Firstly, certain members were of the opinion that participation might be expected to improve morale amongst the workforce. Secondly, others held the view that participation might improve the lot of the managers themselves. Lastly, there was an expressed expectation that it might improve production.

In the first instance, the view was expressed that such a projected scheme might be expected to improve the general morale of the given department. To suggest such a thing can perhaps be taken as admitting and recognising that the existing situation is not entirely satisfactory. It, perhaps, represents a recognition of the type of disenchantments expressed by the shop-floor in the earlier section. The engineering manager, for instance, admitted that grievances, anomalies and disillusionment did exist in his department and he intimated that he hoped a participative set-up might alleviate the situation and thereby improve the morale of this workforce. Improving

morale might be an outcome of participative techniques dealing with substantive grievances, but for others it is more significantly part of that meaning matrix encompassing those notions dealt with under 'co-operation and integration', 'communication and information' and 'fairness, equity and democracy'. But, yet again, the notion was mooted in a particular interactional context. The parameters of the notion did not require explication within the confines of that context. 'Improve morale' was, presumably, seen as sufficiently meaningful and situationally appropriate at the time for further clarification to be seen as unnecessary.

With respect to the second perceived potential improvement, it is as well to be aware of the possible strategic import of such expressions. In relation to this section then, certain members expressed the view that a participative scheme was expected to improve their lot. This view was expressed most overtly by Cyril, the section head of one of the larger departments, when preliminary discussions were being held between the consultants, managers in Cyril's department and management members from a department already involved:-

> Cyril: "I see my job getting easier - things will get right down to everybody."

One of the consultants took up the point and concurred with the view, although a section head from a department with experience in the scheme did not allow an over-rosy picture to develop:-

> H.K. "Life doesn't get more difficult, in fact it might get a little easier."
>
> Section Head: "I wouldn't actually say that - what you are doing is treating people as human beings."
>
> Cyril: "I'm sure my life is going to get easier. I've been spending ages and ages talking to people explaining what's going on."

Apart from the obvious conception of participation as something that might be expected to improve his own situation, Cyril is also implicitly supporting some of the meanings already dealt with in this section. Specifically he is interpreting participation in terms of 'Communication and Information'. He is quite obviously envisaging participation as being essentially an exercise in information dispersal, and as a way of formalising and improving the efficiency of that. Others expressed similar views, that participation might help line management by improving their relationship with the shop-floor and with their superiors, and also by improving communications patterns by making them more formalised and more efficient.

Lastly, one or two members were of the opinion that a participation scheme might be of assistance in improving production. Again the specifics of how this might be achieved were not pursued, it was a vaguely expressed and probably a vaguely conceived possibility. It is, perhaps, an expected orientation from those in a middle-management position. Production efficiency is their raison d'etre and their mode of rationality to their superiors. It is not surprising therefore that they should want to perceive something like a participation scheme in those traditional terms.

Process and Structure Concerns

Like the shop-floor membership, and quite properly, members of middle-management expressed various concerns relating to possible structures and processes of any participation scheme. Many of these points at the specific level are rather uninteresting here since they relate to matters of detail. What they do represent at the general level is a conception of the meaning of participation as a formalised

organisational device. They support the tacitly held assumption that participation entails 'meetings', 'representation' and the bureaucratic paraphenalia that would accompany such exercises. There were concerns expressed, as already indicated, about the make-up of the committee, the ratios of representation, the role of the chairman, processes for proceeding beyond a failed consensus etc. There were also points raised relating to the nature and distribution of minutes, pre-meeting times and locations as well as less tangible topics such as preparation of issues, the processing of issues actually at the meetings and so on. Much of this was couched in the familiar terms of existing organisational bureaucracy, managers seemed to be visualising a scheme that would operate on traditional organisational lines to the extent that much of the structure and peripheral paraphenalia attached to the scheme, would be recognisable as of a similar nature to those traditional organisational features with which they were eminently familiar.

I would like to stress again that, like the shop-floor, the middle-management group were not a homogenous body. There was no consistent interpretation of participation amongst them. The points presented in this section are an attempt to describe some of the relations into which 'participation' was placed in the talk of various members of middle-management. Some are revealed expressly in management talk, in the syntagmatic relations present. Others are, in the form I present them, abstractions from that talk - indexes of more diffuse actual relations or inferences made in relation to a feasible paradigmatic environment.

My very effort to present them in this fashion, of course, instils an order and a categorising that is perhaps not really present in the phenomena. However, I hope it provides the reader with some

insight into the kind of meanings that were in circulation amongst this group. In processual terms these series of relations enter into the public and available discourse in relation to participation at Tridy. They reappear at different points in the text; they change meaning as they are put into new relationships and are spoken of in new contexts. Here they stand as a form of texture of relations manufactured in the interactions between members and between members and consultants but unconnected to any individual.

PART III

PRESENTING PARTICIPATION

CHAPTER I

SENIOR MANAGEMENT DISCOURSE

Before proceeding to a consideration of the overt presentation of 'participation' by management and to suggest what public definitions appeared to be put forward, it is worth looking back briefly to some of the earlier internal debate amongst management in relation to the issue. In particular much early written material, produced for the consumption mainly of managerial and personnel staff, provides documentation and a gloss of much debate and interaction in which various managerial meanings of participation emerged, circulated and became more or less crystalised. Not being privy to much of the dynamic that produced these public pronouncements, the processual features that underlie them are not readily available.

Two points need to be made. In the first instance, the documents and statements in which these varying pronouncements reside were produced in specific contexts; for specific audiences and for specific purposes. The contextual features of them should make us wary of extrapolating beyond those contexts. It may be illusory to suggest, for instance, that the views put forward in certain documents, represented stable and coherent attitudes amongst those a-party to their production. Secondly, much of this material was not made available outside managerial circles. It did not, therefore, enter the linguistic arena of the workforce, or workforce-management relations; at least not directly.

However, although the workforce-management arrangement is of primary focus in the definitional process, not to consider the exclusivity of meanings circulating in solely management circles is, perhaps, to acquiesce too readily to that culturally familiar and expected oppositional arrangement. Meanings associated with

participation that arise in the context of their use in solely managerial discourse are undeniably a fragment of the total process. What I am suggesting is that their relationship to other fragments remains, at present, problematic and largely undiscernable. In other terms though, this array of meanings are part of the text of participation. They serve as an intertext for subsequent meanings emerging in management-shop-floor interactions.

At the earliest stages the very word 'participation' was skirted,like a dangerous bull, in official, repeatable pronouncements. The exercise was referred to variously, but most often some slight variant of 'worker involvement scheme' was employed. For instance, an internal document produced by the personnel department was entitled "Some Thoughts on the Future Implications of the Chemical Plant 'Worker Involvement' Pilot Project". The choice of words is, of course, not incidental.

In managerial discourse the notion of participation was already linked with legalistic, formal arrangements. The Bullock Report and the possibility of some government legislation to compel organisations to adopt some form of participative organisation was a recurrent preoccupation. 'Involvement' has, and was seen to have, a range of different connotations, not least, the retention of management initiative and control. There is a clear implication that 'involvement' was somehow less strong than 'participation'. Involvement has a sense of 'being a part of something', of being wrapped or rolled up in something. It has a sense of unspecified entanglement, even with connotations of obscurity and muddlement. In this way it is even more vague than participation. Already for management 'participation' has an intertextual quality, associated with a welter of discourses which relate participation to formality, to legally

sanctioned organisation, to structures; and most importantly to a sharing in the decision-making process.

Another document prepared by the personnel department makes specific reference to a battery of texts produced in various quarters in the previous few years. Documents produced by all the leading political parties, the T.U.C., the C.B.I., individual trade unions; each receive some consideration. Each of these texts, and others, invade the text produced by the personnel department, and continue to invade the discourse amongst management personnel. The meaning(s) of participation released in the text of the personnel department are not locatable in terms of a simply carry-on from those other texts, nor are they a simple amalgamation. That text must be treated in its own terms, and any meanings are a result of the productivity of its own textual features. Not least, of course, because that text is available within its own specific contextual boundaries. Its meanings are fresh; but reverberate with the traces of those other texts and the discourse they compile. The meanings in the company's text are apparent by being in relation to the signifiers present in those other texts. I shall return to that document shortly.

'Involvement' replaces 'participation'; it is put, then, in relation to participation. 'Involvement' becomes in a sense, 'not-participation'. The 'not' is not necessarily oppositional. 'Involvement' is not antithetical to 'participation', but it is still meant to signify something different. By using 'involvement' there is an awareness of avoiding the full range of implications and connotations indexed by that array of texts to which the personnel document refers. It should be noted, that those other texts too refer to 'involvement', although again not necessarily in ways that can be put in one-to-one correspondence with the way(s) it is used in the company. However, there too, 'participation' and 'involvement' are in a relation of differentiation. The nature of that relationship in the Tridy con-

text will be referred to again subsequently.

The title 'Some Thoughts on...' displays some other features worthy of passing comment. The terms by which the whole exercise ('exercise' itself being a variant) is referred to are varied from time to time and in different contexts. In this particular document it is referred to as a 'project'; and further, as a 'pilot project'. Both these terms can be expected to exert particular connotational force. 'Pilot' is an interesting addition to the title. Its denotational meanings are fairly diverse to begin with, but here, with its syntagmatic relation to 'project',it offers at least a sense of 'experimental', small-scale; but also intimating at a leading-on to something else; there is more to follow. This represents a tension in management, reflected in other documents and conversations. There existed a distinct element of caution, a wariness in relation to the scheme. There was concern lest it moved beyond their control, or developed in unforeseen ways into something undesirable. Remember some had already expressed the fear that the creation of a participative structure might only serve as a provided platform for trade union involvement. The approach and the talk was tentative thereby.

In other documents this early phase, at least, is referred to as 'experimental'. On the other hand, other portions of managerial discourse makes reference to 'commitment'. There is a requirement to 'take the thing seriously'. Some senior managers, very early on, talk of the scheme in site-wide terms. Some personnel documents make much of participation in industrial terms being part of the general march of history. Social, political and educational developments strongly imply the inevitability of a move towards industrial democracy. Tridy must be a party to that movement, must be in-step with the times - or better still, one jump ahead. So there existed a tension between caution, a sense of retaining options, and a sense of commit-

ment and historical inevitability.

The term 'pilot project' is part of the rhetoric constituting that tension. But both words have other significant connotations. 'Pilot' further implies something that guides, that 'leads the way' through some difficult terrain, unfamiliar and potentially hazardous. Think, too, of a 'pilot-light' - a flame kept alight to light another. In some ways the Chemical Plant exercise was perceived by some clearly as a first step, part of a 'gradualist approach', extending the scheme by department. The Chemical Plant as a pilot-light to light the extension of participation throughout the rest of the site. A pilot-light is also an indicator or control light. Both senses have some application in the context of Tridy. Particularly so when considered in syntagmatic relation to the 'experimental' aspects of the terminology used. 'Experimental control' - the Chemical Plant is envisaged as an indicator of responses and reactions to participation, and a point of comparison to other departments - a canary down a coal mine. A testing and monitoring, which if the signals are negative allows the option of retreat and recuperation.

'Project',too, implies a sense of moving out, jutting into fresh space; a moving out from the main body, a new extension. It reflects managerial tension and caution; the sense of extending beyond known and safe limits; of conjuring up the unknown. It also conveys, with its connotations of newness, of casting into the future, the sense of the company being shrewd in being in the forefront of the inevitable tide of change. It concurs with the general espoused culture of a 'progressive' company referred to earlier. Just as the opposing cautionary tendency echoes the company's inherent 'traditionalism' mapped out before.

A project also makes visible and sensible an idea. It makes more tangible some mere thought or half developed scheme. As such it confirms the sense of doing something. Company managers were often habitually pragmatists, concerned with concrete action and results. Indeed on more than one occasion the consultants were referred to as "woolly-minded', 'living in worry towers' and not fully aware of what 'the real world' was about. The term 'project' implies some real action, a welcome concretising of mere 'waffle' about participation.

Both terms have connotations associated with light; 'pilot-light' has already been explored. Project has the sense of shining forward onto some given, distant object. In this way, the two together are mutually reinforcing, associated with a move forward, a step in the dark. Both brave and cautious; progressive but traditional.

One could usefully consider what other terms could have been used in their stead. Project could have been replaced by a variety of other possible terms, or even simply not employed at all. Indeed, as we shall see, 'project' and its more specific form 'pilot-project' were indeed not the only expressions actually used in the Tridy context. I have already mentioned 'experiment'; 'scheme' was also used at various points. The meaning of project is developed in relation to those other expressions used and those that could have been but were not. At this point I will leave the reader to consider some possibilities and their implications.

Already one can begin to see a matrix of words and meanings building up in complex interrelated ways. A matrix that it would make no sense to present graphically a) because of its potential size and complexity and b) because to do so would be to fix and order the meanings in a more formal way than I would wish, and to ignore the emergent, processual, changing nature of the relationships and meanings.

Only a month after the 'Some Thoughts ....' text, the personnel department issued another document that does specifically refer to 'Participation': "Discussion Document on Worker Participation". This document as well as being again only for consumption (a not incidental word) by management (senior at that), is of a very general nature. It does not refer directly to the chemical plant 'experiment' in its overall tone. Rather it is, as it says, a general 'discussion' document on 'worker participation'. The use of 'participation' is sanctioned by this generalising context. The reference to it here distances itself from the specific events at Tridy.

'Participation' was already circulating in general company discourse, particularly when conversations/correspondence involved the university consultants. However, in given contexts it appeared prudent to shift somewhat and couch things in terms of 'worker involvement' or like phrases. The implication of this document is that, whilst events at Tridy may be subsumed under the general rubric of participation, a caveat ensures that the Tridy 'worker involvement project' is not to be taken as synonymous with participation. At the most it is considered rather like a sub-category of participation. Indeed in the document itself it is mentioned thus: "an up-to-date assessment of the small experimental 'worker involvement project' in the Chemical Plant". The combination of 'small', 'experimental' and 'project' strongly reaffirming the comments made previously. The exercise here is being deliberately understated and played down. It is expressly juxtaposed with the more momentous goings-on associated more directly with the term 'participation'. It is a tacit hedging of bets. Although it may be considered (just) as part of the general scene of participation, it still has a long way to go. So again we have this language that both drives forward, progressing towards radical

and extraordinary things, and is also cautious; threatening to scurry back into its shell like a hermit-crab.

The tentativeness is further indexed by the seeming compulsion to place all such expressions in inverted commas. 'Worker involvement' encased thus, gives an impression of uncertainty. Perhaps more significantly it suggests a temporariness. It forms a relationship with 'pilot-project' and 'experimental' in this regard. It marks its difference from the status quo. It is also a marker of temporary exclusion - the exercise is not yet fully incorporated into the organisation. It also intimates a cessation of, and a possible revertion to, normalcy, should the 'experiment' fail.

Other generic terms employed in this early phase included 'exercise' and 'programme'. 'Exercise' again plays the thing down, understating its importance and reaffirming its reversability. 'Programme' is altogether more assertive and stringent. It reflects those more committed, progressive features of managerial discourse. Significantly it was considerably less used than either 'project', 'experiment' or 'exercise'.

'Programme' can perhaps be seen to be associated with 'experimental' in its quasi-scientific overtones (particularly in these computer days). Programme reflects a formality, a logical, analytic, systematic approach. Much managerial discourse is inhabited by such language and by the language of pseudo-science. In the latter case the use of 'experiment' is the most readily apparent example. 'Experiment' was not only used as a title, but was used quite often in general reference to events related to participation at Tridy. The expression persisted even until the point when I entered the company and the 'scheme' was being extended to the packaging department.

'Experiment' was not an isolated expression, but part of a common thread of scientistic language running through the texture of managerial discourse. Expressions like 'quantify on a matrix', 'analysis of ...', 'determine variables' are not uncommon. This together with a full complement of terms with a social science lineage used glibly and comfortably. Social 'roles', 'skills improvement programmes', 'participative environment', 'self analysis' and so forth, were fairly common coinage. Indeed much of managerial language in relation to human resources issues was shot through with an argot cribbed from the social sciences. (Although it must be noted that such expressions have long since pervaded common parlance and this situation is only distinguished by a matter of degree).

One might suggest that in a modern organisation like Tridy the language of business is only made complete by the adaptation of the languages of science. Contemporary business organisations align themselves with the wider social movement of which the technological and scientific movement is still part of the mythology. All things, including those of business, are explainable in scientific terms - indeed, no other form of explanation will do. Answers and guidance in the language of science are <u>good</u> and appropriate answers. Science is the new diety; the contemporary gnosology - serving to guide us morally and pragmatically.

It is important, then, for a participation exercise to shroud itself in a language of science. This rhetorical ploy is more a matter of self convincement for management than a necessary one with which to persuade or convince a workforce. Science is the adopted yardstick of management, they can only justify and legitimise things

to themselves if it can appear unto them in the correct arrayment. The involvement of University academics has some bearing on this point. Managers were often seen to invoke 'expert' opinion to bolster a point they were trying to put across.

A related movement in managerial discourse is located in a preoccupation, or so it seemed at times, with training and skills. The personnel department issued numerous documents that referred to the need for training, that set out training 'programmes'; that discussed the 'development of skills'. It is important to contextualise these pronouncements by bearing in mind that an organisationally perceived raison d'etre of personnel departments is to devise and manage the training requirements of the company. A personnel department justifies its existence and is seen to be doing proper work when it involves itself in training. There might be said to be an organisational compulsion for participation issues to be couched in terms of training, whether training is fundamentally seen as relevant or not.

The following are typical statements:

> "Map out the framework of a skills improvement programme which will incorporate both individual and group involvement."
>
> "An analysis of the different skills needed to manage in a different style."
>
> "An assessment of training needed to improve these skills."
>
> "An aid to structuring skills improvement programmes."

The language here participates in that discourse derived from the recent history of the social sciences. The doctrine that human beings can be altered, their behaviour modified, their personalities affected by the application of certain practices refined by the sciences of man. It is an attitude that suggests that persons

are imperfect beings, not in the sense of the Fall but in the sense of having underdeveloped capacities, inadequate personalities. Such invalids can be improved by the skilful manipulations of an initiate into the mysteries of social science, particularly psychology.

The language also embodies signifying associations that help to create a sense of an ordered, rational approach to a problem. 'Framework', 'programme', 'analysis', 'assessment', 'structuring'; each contributes towards fostering this image of logical, sensible, ordered proceedings conducted by men with similar attributes. Such language paddocks the potentially wild notions surrounding participation. Participation is seen as something new/different, as a challenge to established and traditional ways of doing things. Members are unclear about what it might entail. We have already witnessed some of this anxiety and confusion the notion stirs up. In its very difference it is unsettling. In its ambiguity it is unsettling. What exists is order, stability, the status quo. Anything different becomes tainted with oppositional characteristics. Thus participation becomes a potentially disordering influence, a disruption, an ally of chaos and anarchy. Language of the kind itemised above, when it surrounds 'participation' diminishes these 'wild' allusions of death. They serve to relocate participation in a familiar linguistic code. They are comforters. Both by their familiarity and by their scientistic, logical ordering connotations. If participation can be put into a linguistic set that belongs to the discourse of science and reason then, by implication, it is explainable and controllable. It is capable of submitting to the new moral order. It need not be feared.

It is further taken to be containable since it is only a matter of skill - something one can be trained to master. It can be sub-

mitted to the governing ministrations of the trainer and the social scientist. Individuals can be schooled in its mysteries and given the means to control it. Control of unruly and threatening nature is the primum mobile of science. Company documents talk explicitly of "Desirable Managerial skills for a participative style of management" and "training in participative skills." Participation is not viewed here as a process - as an interactive process - nor even as a structural arrangement, rather it is discussed as a question of style, as a skill that management can obtain, master and operate.

The language here already transgresses itself. Talk of 'participative management skills' and 'developing a participative style of management' already retains control of a movement, from manager to shop-floor. It's a question of the participative style of management. It is up to management to get to grips with the issue, to learn and master the appropriate skills and thus to gain control. The initiative remains with management - the implication is that participation is something, at best, given to the shop-floor, or something done to them.

The very notion that people can be trained to participate is perhaps, in concept, a little strange. It perhaps reflects a belief in the validity and power of education; education as a value held by a managerial class. It further suggests that to act participatively is not a natural thing at all. It is something other than the normal range of abilities and attributes people, and specifically managers, may reasonably be expected to have. Again participation is here being taken as something new and different. Differentiated from normal procedures and practices. Something requiring recuperation into familiar regions of discourse.

It must be said that aligning participation and training reflects as much certain organisational obligations as anything else. The

university consultants had all along emphasised that participation should not be thought of as merely constituted by some structural form derived simply from a blueprint plan. Although company members often found it difficult not to put it in those terms, the personnel department may be seen here as recasting it in human skills and interpersonal relations terms. This again reflects an emphasis provided by the university consultants. Since the university team were viewed, on the whole, as knowledgeable experts, and had some influence at a senior level in the company, the personnel department (especially one of its senior managers) was keen to be seen to be in step with their academic counterparts. Thus, seminars, training programmes, analysis of skills etc. may be viewed as a demonstration by them that they are in tune with the consultants, whether that view was misguided or not. Further, within the company, any organisational issue is expected to be handled in organisationally appropriate and legitimate ways. Organising seminars and conducting training programmes are certainly part of what an organisation would sanction a personnel department for undertaking. They are also the kind of activities that managers would expect to take part in.

Similar points relate to the use of the word 'style', either used separately or in conjunction with training and skills. Thus:

> "An analysis of the different skills needed to manage in a different style."
>
> "Implications of a change in management style."

Indeed one document talks of the inevitability of a change in managerial style.

Again, participation is seen as requiring something new from the management personnel. Participation entails a change of management personnel. Participation entails a change of management style. Again the emphasis is upon an initiative from

management. Participation requires activity on the part of management. Although clearly the implication is not necessarily simply that with a change in management style participation will be achieved. A softer, more reasonable version has it that, if participation develops then it will necessitate a change in style amongst those managers involved. Just what 'style' is, or might mean is not made clear. But part of the trend here is to suggest mere alterations to an existing state of affairs, rather than any radical alternatives: the 'soft' end of change.

In these texts under consideration, participation has already been associated with change in the specific case of changes in (managerial) style and skill, but it is associated with change in its more general aspects also.

There is a double movement here. Firstly, participation, within the company requires change, it is part of a change exercise. Secondly, it is conceived of as part of a more general, society-wide change. As it is stated in the document, "Discussion Document on Worker Participation":

> "Changing times will inevitably mean greater participation of staff at all levels. A state of planned change is preferable to precipitated action forced by pressure of events."
>
> "Accelerated change involving greater participation reflects trends both political and educational."

The company's flirting with participation is expressly linked with events in the wider society. The internal dynamics of this strategy revolve around an attempt at self-convincement. A senior manager in Personnel (let's call him James Macheath) had a personal (career) commitment to see the successful implementation of some form of participation. Much of the documentation emanating from the personnel department owes much to his influence. At times he assumes an almost

evangelical stance in which he is the person who all along knew 'participation' was right and should and would come about. He saw it as part of his task to convince others of the rightness and foresight of his views.

Some of these texts then represent an attempt by Macheath and those interests he represented within the company to promote the very idea of participation, to persuade other members of management staff of the rightness, the benefits, the inevitability of participation.

Various texts attempt to link participation with an overall background of 'forces' in society that are said to have a direct bearing on the industrial scene. In one text various 'external forces' are identified in the 'overall background' that impinge in this way. They are a) educational, b) social, c) political, d) legal. Each item reflects an aspect of the intertext surrounding public pronouncements on the issue of industrial democracy. 'Political' refers to the renewed interest of political parties in the issue and the publication by all political parties and affiliated bodies of documents setting down more or less specific views on the issue. Much of this goes towards a climatic point with the production of the Bullock Report. 'Legal' reflects a fear, already referred to, that Government action was imminent and that the company might find themselves saddled with legislation for which they are ill-prepared and have some participation scheme foisted upon them - possibly with a statutory trade union involvement. As another document puts it, the company should take into account:

> "Regard for external pressures which could impose changes in company attitudes and methods of communication and consultation."

With regard to 'education' and broader 'social' forces, it is an often expressed viewpoint of participation literature that an increasing democratisation in society's other institutions and in social life generally, should be reflected more in our industrial and commercial institutions. The company's own version of this portion of the 'debate' is put fairly succinctly:

> "The expectation for people at work to be involved in matters which affect them will increase as a natural reflection of changed teaching methods at school. From their most formative years children are encouraged to express frank and open comments often in direct disagreement with their teachers. It is not surprising that they expect this process to continue when they begin their working life."

Macheath (for it is mainly he) inserts "an up-to-date assessment of the small experimental 'worker involvement project' in the Chemical Plant at Pencham" with a jamboree of textual gleanings related to this socio-politico-legal movement. By so embedding it he seeks to make it part of it. Although he must be wary to achieve some distancing to retain some differentiation between Participation per se and that which was going on at Tridy.

The words reflect a strong social determinism. Indeed one that goes rankly wild when it talks of 'external pressures which could impose changes in company attitudes'. Or at least it is part of a rhetoric that posits such social determinism to add strength and urgency to the argument. Indeed much of this documentation activates a rhetoric that is aimed at convincing recalcitrant managers of the direction the company needs to pursue. Firstly, the texts seek to display an affinity to an array of scholarly and shrewd texts propounding the virtues of industrial democracy. The force of that ploy depends in some measure on the presented breadth of opinion encountered, from the reactionary Bow Group to the T.U.C. Macheath is marshalling and ordering his evidence to bolster and justify his own

position. A position characterised by a rejection of the legal imposition of a 'blueprint' plan; by the view that any participation scheme should be moulded to suit the particular company ("...no single pattern should be required by statute"); and by a commitment to an evolutionary, gradualist approach in which there is "slow, controlled evaluated introduction of change...essential, if lasting progress is to be made." This position echoes, and greatly reveals the influence of, the consultants. Indeed, parts of Macheath's text is a direct reproduction of texts produced by the consultants.

More fundamentally these texts are linked to a wider social movement, involving the major institutions of society. They refer directly to 'changing times' and 'external forces'. An attempt is being made to link events at Pencham with a movement of historical inevitability. The 'analysis' of external forces, the historical review, the patchwork of political opinion are all collocated into a rhetoric of inevitability. There is a tide of events in society that is progressing naturally towards greater participation. This movement is inescapable; the company should be aware of it and travel with it. 'It's a smart move to be in time with the times, and even smarter to pre-empt the march of history and set up industrial democracy from our own initiative. If it is inevitable, we may as well do something concrete about it now, whilst the options are still in our control.'

Again, the rhetoric here attempts to be persuasive in relation to those other company managers perceived as reticent.

> "Some thoughts on the Future Implications..."
>
> "It is clear that both for internal and external reasons there can be no cessation of the project, and that some form of similar exercise must be introduced totally at Pencham."

It is also part of a rhetoric by which Macheath presents himself as the company expert on participation. An opportunist ploy devised to assist his organisational career. He is, further, attempting to ally himself with the consultants. Firstly, by displaying scholarly attributes, and secondly by reiterating their own language and thereby demonstrating that he and they are on the same wavelength.

Participation, then, on these pronouncements at least, both involves change within the company; in certain practices, in managerial style and skill, and also engages and reflects a general movement of change in the wider society. By being 'in step' the company can give concrete expression to its espoused 'progressive' character. The smart, forward-thinking American company, ahead of its times, wholly modernistic in its approach.

It begins to become apparent then, that the meaning of 'participation' (within the setting of Tridy in this case) is produced in its relations of difference (and sameness) to a range of other signifiers arranged around it syntagmatically and paradigmatically. From very early on the potentially infinite play of signifiers is curtailed by a processof reinforcing certain associations, ignoring others, and denying still others. There is a process in the development of the discourse in which boundaries begin to emerge around the meaning. It is a process that closes-off the meaning, if not down to a single unitary meaning, then at least to one within specific limits. The process never becomes static, the system of relationships remains flexible. Fresh associations are allowed to cross the boundary, others are shut outside. However, gradually over time, a kind of semi-permeable membrane is established that tends to contain the network of signifying relationships within more or less stable limits. As particular relations are habitually reinforced in particular contexts of use, and others are habitually

neglected the fabrics malleability diminishes. This status is never absolute, and is forever in a highly tenuous state.

We begin to see the development of this process from the outset. Its original seeding and early germination are perhaps lost - but as with all processes the point of entry is not crucially vital. It is also extremely difficult and not wholly desirable to over-systematise the process. A synchronic analysis of a network of associations at a particular point in time might be just practically feasible, but would do scant justice to its processual nature. The whole of this thesis, rather, reflects to some degree an exploration of that shifting arrangement of associations (and some attempt to explain how and why they develop and sometimes fade). That work has already begun to some extent. Here I begin to dip into that network more overtly.

In the "Discussion Document on Worker Participation" the following paragraph appears:

> "The move towards greater employee participation in company affairs has happened slowly over the past fifty years in British industry. Collective bargaining and joint consultation although not universally applied has grown over that period." (my emphasis).

Here 'participation' is immediately located in the same linguistic space as both 'joint consultation' and 'collective bargaining'. An association strengthened in that document's consideration of the range of other texts germane to the 'Great Debate'. Reinforced more expressly in relation to Tridy when "The Pencham Experience" is discussed (from the same source):

> "On a number of occasions during the past five years suggestions have been made to introduce some form of consultative procedure to reflect the importance of joint consultation in the U.K. industrial relations scene. During last year, Tridy Drugs Industries invited Professor L.A. Hamming to assist the Company in a 'Worker Participation Project'."

Herein lies the seeds of an assocation between participation and consultation that continues to reappear as the scheme progresses. Consultation, of course, in no way implies power-sharing, or a positive stake in actual decision-making. It may connate with a mutual coming together; an assembly. It might even imply the seeking of advice/information from some other party - or in joint consultation a mutual exchange of views and opinions. Or, further, a respectful consideration and due regard for (another parties viewpoint). It does not, in this context anyway allow a convergence with a sharing of formal administrative power, or with the entrance of another party into the actual point of decision-making. It does not naturally embody a devolution of decision-making power.

The association once more recuperates participation. It situates it within a familiar and understandable linguistic frame. Consultation has an established history in industrial relations discourse. It has a more or less determinable place within that discourse that allows it to be used in familiar, even institutionalised ways. 'Consultation' will not 'run wild' as its 'linguistic parameters', as it were, are already fairly well established. By promulgating the link, participation is annexed into a pre-established crasis of terms and associated practices. One might suggest that given the need to convince other people (particularly other managers) about participation, such a cohabitation of terms again serves a rhetorical purpose. The language of consultation is already known and is thereby less threatening. It will be familiar

through assorted media coverage etc. and its generally non-radical nature have become apparent over time.

Participation starts to become sensible by being placed in a given network of signifying relations. The process is reinforced and added to in other texts and discussion. For example, the document "Chemical Plant Project - Where Do We Go?" again employs consultation in relation to participation, but goes further in supplying some syntagmatic relations for consultation itself. In addressing the issue of 'The Wider Company Scene' the document states that:

> "This can be seen in discussions on 'how can we involve our employees more widely in matters which affect them'."
>
> "All movements towards involvement can be related to a continuum
>
> communications
> :
> consultation
> :
> joint agreement."

Here the document sets out its own 'linguistic parameters' in a most graphic form, although the 'continuum' is related to 'involvement' rather than 'participation'. (The relationship between 'participation' and 'involvement' has already been touched on. The continuum gives concrete expression to a truncated signifying chain. It reveals certain semantic boundaries that ensnare participation (or more correctly here, involvement - although participation is in the arrangement since the document refers expressly to it and to industrial democracy.) From 'communications' to 'joint agreement', expresses the range of permissible discourse in relation to participation. The very boundedness of the continuum is revealing. If we take 'joint agreement' as an uppermost extremity then certain other possible

associations are precluded. The academic literature on participation has perennially attempted to similarly locate participation on a continuum. Compare the above with Globerson's (1970) version:

General Information to personnel	Joint Consultation	Passive Participation in Management	Active Participation in Management	Self Management

Or the more verbose one presented by K. Walker (1975):

> Management decides unilaterally without prior information to workers.
>
> Management decides unilaterally but workers are informed before decision is put into effect.
>
> Management decides after hearing workers views.
>
> Negotiations take place but management goes ahead if no agreement is reached.
>
> Negotiations take place and no action is taken without agreement.
>
> Workers decide unilaterally.

The company version is not only severely compressed - it loses altogether portions from the extreme right of the other continuums. In other words, there is a curtailment of potential regions of discourse in relation to participation that excludes 'self-management', unilateral decision-making by workers or workers control.

The specific tone and form of language of the company continuum should, itself, not be viewed naively. Its extreme brevity (the terms are not expanded upon significantly subsequently) ensures a continued vagueness. Just what 'communications' or 'joint agreement' might entail is tantalisingly mysterious. It should be noted that the inclusion of 'joint agreement' is somewhat of a departure from the forms of expression used in other company texts. It leans more toward a more 'radical' interpretation of participation

than more normally appears the case. Not, of course, that the other continuums exhaust possible alternatives or a range of possibilities. It is here, perhaps, that we confront the limits of our own radicalism, or otherwise. At this stage I merely want to alert the reader to the beginnings of a process in which the meanings of participation are closed-off.

'Involvement' is again employed in this document, both as a kind of generic title, but also in a sentence that provides some ground for its meaning; "How can we involve our employees more widely in matters which affect them". The sentence has a paternalistic edge to it: 'how can we'; 'our employees'. The we brings it into the realms of the much quoted 'paradox of participation': 'you will participate'. It is an eternal difficulty of introducing a participative exercise, that too frequently its initial implementation requires dictat and unilateralism in absolute contravention of the spirit of that which is being prosecuted. The initiative here is seen to be the responsibility of management, how can they do something to enable their workers to become 'involved'.

On the very next page a very similar sentence appears, but 'discuss' stands in place of 'involve'. Elsewhere there is mention of providing a 'forum for discussion'. Participation is here put into a relationship with discussion. Participation will involve discussions (between different levels within the organisation). Perhaps the implication is that 'involvement' is to be taken to mean 'discussion'. Shop-floor workers will be invited to consider issues of 'mutual' interest, or that 'concern them', to put their view and to hear the views of others. Discussion introduces a connotation of rationality, of good sense. Reasonable, intelligent people 'discuss' - others argue or confront. It is businesslike to discuss. This is reinforced by the word 'forum' with its connotations of formal and controlled debate - a sensible, public airing of general problems.

Although 'forum's' connotation of ancient open democracy may also not be lost here.

Certain other fragments appear in this earlier documentation, some of which thread through different phases of the project, others that emerge situationally and then die away leaving only a trace. For instance, one fragment that rapidly takes hold and becomes central to the whole fabric is the relationship between participation and representation. The rapidity of the development of this relationship, its almost universal and immediate acceptance, and its ability to exclude nearly all competing relationships is revealing, and to me, came as something of a surprise. It is unclear how the relationship originally came to the fore, but it seems as if it was already taken as a wholly natural relationship. And once made, it immediately became a taken-for-granted by almost everybody. Rarely, if ever, was the sense or appropriateness of the relationship challenged, or an alternative put forward. In conceiving of a structure that could embody participation it seemed as if only a representational system could be entertained.

It would seem silly to deny that the apparent verocity of the relationship is not associated with the pervasive political discourse of this country. That representational democracy is the nexus of political discourse in most political spheres in British society ensures its foregrounding in any fresh political situation. At least for those who accept, tacitly or actively, its habituation in that position; for those who have not encountered other discourses in which representational democracy is not pivotal but only one amongst alternatives. Its ready emergence and acceptance at Tridy is an indication of the acceptance there of the naturalness of the relationship and its rightful place at the heart of any political discourse. It meant that talk at Tridy would circulate almost

entirely within that discourse and would rarely admit alternative frames to invade it.

In accepting representation as a legitimate and appropriate expression of participation, there was an implicit acceptance of other, associated things. Routine discourse on representational systems tends to incorporate a network of familiar terms. Representation entails some form of assembly or committee; 'forum' even. There will be a representational body that must meet up collectively and 'discuss' things germane to that body and those it represents. The entry of 'committees' and 'meetings' introduces an elaborate, interrelated paraphenalia of practices. Agendas, minutes, chairmen, secretaries, voting procedures and so on - a self-contained, fresh language intermeshed with and around 'committee' and 'meetings'.

Representation also associates forcibly with elections. British political discourse talks of an electoral representational democracy, with universal suffrage now taken as a natural right. In a representational body at Tridy there would be an early expectation of at least some electoral activity. However, it becomes apparent even in their early documents that variations on a theme are permissable. Talk of elections came to apply immediately and obviously to the whole workforce, but in relation to management a stammer became apparent. Shop-floor representatives would be elected - but managerial representatives would be 'nominated'.

A sensible-sounding organisational rhetoric can, and was marketed to justify this disparity. In many departments in which representational bodies were to be established, there was only one department manager and maybe one section head but always many shop-floor workers. Therefore it is necessary to appoint the manager to the committee. Similarly with the personnel manager and area director - they must be on the committee - there is no one really

to elect them so they must be appointed.

This argument, of course, glosses many crucial assumptions and taken-for-granteds. It glosses a tacit belief that a representational body must be balanced in some way. It is assured that a committee operating on participative principles must contain members from all levels of the organisation. It must allow space for managerial representatives, from each level, as the company insisted. But, of course, the levels included were in reality arbitrary or situationally specific. Although the Steering Committee might have insisted that the department manager be included, or even in some cases that the managing director and/or operations directors be included, it did not feel obliged to suggest that the director of Tridy Drugs Industries attend from London or that they should fly in the chairman of Tridy Industries and Co. Ltd. Sufficient unto the purposes at hand. Sufficient to retain control over the proceedings. For instance, in referring to the reconstitution of the Steering Committee, one company report reiterates the importance of the need for 'directors and senior managers' from other factory areas to be involved and that "The idea of a management control and co-ordinating mechanism still seems a good one ..."

There is no inkling that shop-floor reps. might meet on their own and make their own decisions. There is no suggestion that shop-floor reps. meet directly with the managing director to obtain rapid ratification of points raised. There is no notion even of shop-floor reps. sitting on a board with the directors with equal or any voting rights. The representational system on this count, requires representative from all (i.e. their selected) levels. Fairness is the espoused value; each group being allowed to have its say. Representational systems are fair, they are part of our traditional democracy; But then the most integral part of that democratic system

elections is bastardised by the company. 'Representationalism is fair - elections are fair - but in this case ...' Managers are nominated because ... they are managers.

The rhetoric that supports participation begins here to transgress itself. Participation is surrounded by a rhetoric that associates it with traditional and 'naturally good' democratic practices, but at a certain point in the discourse that rhetoric reaches its limit and language from beyond its bounds seeps in. The rhetorical association - participation - representational democracy, by which participation is sold and bolstered, is undercut by the entrance of 'nominated'. I am not concerned here with whether or not the practical arguments to justify nomination are valid. 'Nomination' reintroduces into the discourse the language of unilateral control and power. It reiterates that control over the scheme resides in a powerful elite that lies beyond the auspices of the democratic process being promulgated. The 'paradox of participation' resurfaces. I suspect we will have to return to these issues again and again.

Similar difficulties are apparent in other portions of these early texts. The simple form of the paradox is encountered often in talk about the planning and development of the scheme. "We (i.e. Prof. L.A. Hamming, Dr. Howard Kirknatch (the other university consultant), J. Macheath and T. Losthole (the managing director during the early phases of the project)) outline <u>our</u> proposals for the next step." and "Manager drafts and negotiates proposals for participation" ('negotiate' here refers to negotiations with the personnel department or with members of the quartet named above). At all stages in the development of the scheme, planning and design lay solely in the initiative of management in conjunction with the university consultants. There was much talk about the options being open to the

workforce, about them being able to reject the scheme, about the form of the scheme being developed in consultation with them. In reality much of the detail for the scheme was worked out beforehand by members of this elite group and presented as a fait accomplis to the workforce. The dynamics of this process will be examined in more detail later.

It should be noted, that the university consultants at least, were aware of the paradoxical element of this phase, in this straightforward sense. They tended to view it as inevitable and as a necessary stage if any progress was to be made at all.

The language of control and unilateralism, with its paradoxical connection with the espoused project, appears in more surreptitious forms elsewhere. In the document "Chemical Plant Project - Where Do We Go?" after presenting the continuum of involvement alluded to earlier, the following warning is issued:

> "It is clear that at some stage decisions will be necessary on how far the company is prepared to move on a variety of topics."

Already the management is preparing its defence against participation transcending the bounds they place upon it. The company will, again unilaterally, decide what areas are legitimate for the participation arena, and the extent and scope of the issues that can be raised and pursued there. As might be expected this attempt at boundary control itself becomes a major issue as we shall see. In the text "Developments in 'worker participation'." (issued around the same time as "Chemical Plant Project...?") the point is made with clarity as 'key issues to be resolved':

> "e) To whom does the group report.
>
> f) How strong is its influence? Decisions or advice or sounding opinions?
>
> g) The scope of topics - and how determined."

Point g) is straightforward enough. Point e) again slyly hints at managerial control and unilateralism. Even when representational groups are established they are still required to report to someone. That someone is undoubtedly a senior manager, someone out of and above the democratic process. There is an implication of a force outside the committee to whom it must refer for ratification - who might then have the power of veto.

In point f) there is once again *a priori* attempt to delimit the processes of the group - to predefine its terms of reference. To control and contain the nature of the discourse and the power base of the group.

At two other points in the discourse at this stage similar aberrations emerge. They may be characterised under the language of evaluation and the language of ownership (of the project).

Any evaluation of the scheme is obviously an important and politically moot point. Much has been made in the participation literature (if I can call it that) about the criteria for evaluating a participation scheme. In the early days a direct relationship was made between participation and job satisfaction (Vroom (1959); Fleishman and Harris (1962)). Although Pearlin (1962); and Aiken and Hage (1966) are an antidote to this relationship which has been increasingly challenged as a useful point of evaluation since (Lischeron, Wall (1975; 1976); Warr and Wall (1975); Obradovic (1970)). Others have attempted to measure the effects of participation in terms of aspects of individual and/or organisational performance and efficiency (Morse & Reimer (1956); Juralewicz (1974); Israel and As (1960); Lawrence and Smith (1955); Mozina, Jerovsek, Tannenbaum and Likert (1970)). Still others attempted evaluations in terms of more pragmatic company indices such as absenteeism (e.g. Novara (1973) and Gardell (1971)). All questions relating to

evaluation must be preceded, however, with questions about definition. How participation is defined, both by the organisation being studied and by the researcher, will manifestly have crucial implications for the criteria employed for evaluation and how that evaluation is to be conducted.

At Tridy one is hard-pressed to discover any formulated criteria of evaluation. Some of the reasons for its origination have already been outlined, but items such as 'to forestall the unions' were not readily discussed as a point for evaluation. Any evaluation work undertaken early on was in terms of the workers agreement to take part and acceptance of what had been done. The push to get the scheme off the ground seemed, at least for a while, to become the major preoccupation, and measures of success centred on the acceptance of the scheme, the achievement of the establishment of committees and the maintenance of those structures. An extremely curious quote illustrates this attitude:

> "What has happened to date is that 15 meetings have been achieved."

No mention of the content of those meetings, what was discussed and decided upon, or how people reacted. Participation by numbers!

As already stated, points of evaluation are ineluctably tied to the way in which participation is defined. In a sense, its success or otherwise is related to the extent to which it continues to match that definition and how far it deviates from it. As the definition is itself processual and emergent, then one might well expect the criteria of evaluation to fluctuate also.

Given the pronouncement that a 'slow, controlled, evaluated introduction of change' is important there was surprisingly little debate as to what would constitute a success, what the company hoped to achieve with participation, nor how that might be measured.

Aims were in this way vaguely expressed - 'involve workers in matters which affect them' - or covert - e.g. to pre-empt the foisting of a statutory system.

The company, following a lead given by the consultants, opted to forego formal measurement techniques. Instead, again with the aid of the consultants, a continuous scrutiny was maintained on the progress of the scheme and the reactions of those involved. However, it is still unclear exactly what it was being monitored for, except trouble in a general sense. Or what was considered as the aim of the exercise against which it could be evaluated. As already hinted, any evaluation that was undertaken appeared more concerned to report on the continued establishment, development and maintenance of a representational superstructure. A continued willingness of the shop-floor, or more pertinently their representatives to take part was also deemed important. One might also suggest that any monitoring was concerned to evaluate how closely the scheme was developing in accordance with current definitions of participation. A scrutiny was maintained to identify those areas or persons who represented trouble or potential trouble. Deviants and deviations from the boundaries of participation attained by continued discourse; that trespassed the limits of tolerance and threatened to severely destabilise the definition(s) currently in play.

Since this thesis deals primarily with emerging and changing definitions of participation, it follows that the issue of evaluation will reappear. For the moment I wish to highlight some particular points that struck me from the preliminary documentation.

Firstly, any evaluative language engaged is varied between two extremes; either pedantically concrete or vaguely unspecific. For instance, a case of the former concerns the 'achievement of 15 meetings'. 'Progress has been slow and minimal' would be an example

of the latter. A general point might be made that any criteria that might have been applied, were inevitably those considered important by management. This is not to say, though, that the shop-floor did not have an input into the monitoring process. The shop-floor, in a sense, had their own language of evaluation. Although subject again to the contests of the definitional process.

Referring to 'progress has been slow' - an important question left unanswered would be, progress for whom and what is the nature of that progress or its lack? The nature of 'progress' remains unspecified. One should note, however, that the term ties in with the participation - change relationship. There is a clear expectation of change, and change in a positive, if unclear, direction.

Other evaluative terms are scattered throughout the material that beg the same questions. Talk of 'valuable information', 'effective representation' fails to relate the judgemental expressions to anything - 'valuable' to whom? - in what sense 'effective'? In discussing the future of the project the question is put "Has the time spent been worthwhile?" without any supplementary clarification of how 'worthwhile' might be assessed, or who's criteria are to be taken as relevant. The phrasing of the question is not incidental. The company were constantly aware of the loss and potential loss of working man-hours due to involvement in meetings and associated activities. Indeed in a memo from Losthole to Hamming discussing future plans the question was explicitly put : What are "the associated costs of each of these options" (although costs here would imply non-monetary losses also.)

To repeat, the language of evaluation would reflect the definition(s) of participation that emerge as the scheme progresses. Both the definitional and evaluative processes are expressly political processes and both are irrevocably intertwined. The language of

evaluation is as revealing of an underlying ideology as the language of the definitional process.

Lastly in this section I want to briefly address what I chose to term the language of ownership. This issue abuts with the more general paradox of participation as it has begun to emerge in this text. It further cannot be completely separated from the ownership of the criteria and language of evaluation.

Briefly, the discourse surrounding participation, where management are involved, is characterised by a language that possesses the exercise on their behalf. The discourse is shot-through with the language of possession - a language that inverts that possession in management. Once again it is a language that undercuts the rhetoric espoused to support the notion of participation. Assertions of ownership, even when nebulous, run counter to protestations of sharedness, involvement, frankness and openness.

Much of these originary texts relating to the design and instigation of the scheme are replete with a language which recuperates the ownership of the project for management, or rather for an elite inner circle that includes the academic consultants. 'In projecting our ideas ahead ....', 'what do we expect ...', 'how do we ...' are highly typical. To be sure on occasions it represents an expression of corporate identity - the 'we' refers to The Company. In other cases the reference is clearly to an inner policy setting cabal. In any case, references to The Company in this way are merely a rhetorical gloss that obfuscates the direct reference to those with the power to set policy and make decisions.

Looking back over much of what has already been said, the reader would be able to locate for himself numerous other examples, particularly at those points where 'the paradox of participation' is alluded to; or where the initiative resides in management and partici-

pation is given to or done to the workforce (e.g. training for management skills); or more recently, where the criteria of evaluation are management derived. "How can we involve our employees ..."; "how far the company is prepared to move..." etc. Elsewhere ownership is given over to departmental managers. Discussions are proposed to "identify and define their needs, preferences, etc. (if any) for participation in their departments." Included in this latter example is reference to the ownership of the place of work. Workplace departments belong to managers supervising those areas: "their departments".

An ironic reference is made to the issue in one of the texts put out by the personnel department with regard to a managerial seminar organised to discuss participation. Here the inner sanctum magnanimously decides to offer other managers the opportunity to take part in 'developing future plans'. Adding the comment "It should be a case of 'practising what we preach'". That group becomes self-reflexive and arrives at the realisation that it had been engaged in the paradox of participation. It now proposed to allow other senior managers to participate in the development of the participation project. However, only a paragraph later the language of ownership reasserts itself - the omniscience of the elite reaffirmed:

> "A meeting has been arranged for ....., for L.A. Hamming to talk to line management in the packaging area with the objective of outlining what we are proposing and what we hope to achieve."

CHAPTER 2

MARKETING PARTICIPATION

Much of the initial responsibility for introducing the workforce to the idea and concept of participation at Tridy fell to the academic consultants. But, whilst a clear cut division is not totally appropriate, I shall here be dealing mainly with some illustrations of the presentation of the scheme and its ideas undertaken by management staff, or with those interactions with management in which participation was discussed.

It will be clear that much of what emerges here, had already circulated in the discourse surrounding participation amongst senior management as described earlier. However, the fresh context requires fresh analysis.

Rubber Triangles

A convenient point to enter this element is the formal or semi-formal presentation of the scheme to the representatives of the packaging department. The burden of this task was assumed by P. Sherry, the new managing director who had replaced Losthole some short time before. Sherry reaffirmed his support for the project, declared himself 'for participation' and undertook a more active personal involvement.

The presentation he gave had been worked out soon after his appointment with much assistance from Macheath and had already been given to the Chemical Plant Group and the Steering Committee and to other management groups. It had become quite a slick operation incorporating projection slides, overhead projectors and blackboard graphics. (N.B. such physical paraphenalia and its signifying force is discussed elsewhere.)

The'show' begins, after courtesy introductions, with a stark slide that echoes a relationship uncovered earlier:

WORKER PARTICIPATION
MEANS
GREATER INVOLVEMENT

The relationship 'participation-involvement' has already been discussed in some detail but rarely has it appeared in such an obvious concrete form. The statement is quite explicit; participation means greater involvement. The starkness of the image has no truck with equivocation. Its aggressiveness pushes alternatives firmly to one side. It severely closes off any potential meanings associated with participation and makes a bold, naive bid to reduce it to one unitary meaning. It attempts to totally occupy the linguistic space around participation limiting it to this one relationship.

However, as soon as Sherry begins to speak the enclosed unity of that relation is shattered and further meanings emerge from the fragments. Other relations are immediately established that begin to run the meaning of participation through its mesh of possibilities. Again 'influence' is introduced in relation to participation. The old network of relations - involvement - communication - information - re-emerges again here. Despite this rapid flurry the proliferation of meaning is not allowed to run-on unchecked. The range is kept within familiar bounds. The mention of 'representatives' at this stage is hardly cause for comment. That particular association had by this time already become firmly established and most readily accepted. Representatives were to come together from all 'levels' of the company to 'discuss' particular issues. 'Levels' of course is a reflection of a metaphor for company structural arrangements that

highlights its hierarchical character. As metaphor it is widely accepted and very familiar. One might suggest that already that metaphor crunches into the rhetoric of participation creating disquieting undercurrents. That challenge is partially met by linking participation with information and communication which itself implies a passing from one position to another - so why not down a vertical plane from level to level; especially since that is the expected and habitual direction in industrial organisations. The metaphor is reinforced by talk such as:

> "What might be the next <u>vertical</u> step in the participation process."

The metaphors are mixed and heavy here. The spatial metaphor implied by 'vertical' linked with the more general metaphor of organisational structure encapsulated by 'levels'. The metaphor of 'step', a metaphor of movement and of physicality. Step connotes a discreteness of movement, a steady gradated progress that ties in nicely with the espoused gradualist approach to participation generally. Both these terms don't sit happily in syntagmatic relationship with 'process'; particularly its sense of continuity, of on-goingness does not neighbour well with the digital implications of step.

The next slide presented, initially came as something of a surprise for its apparent frankness. It was introduced with the explanation that it portrayed two objectives of participation.

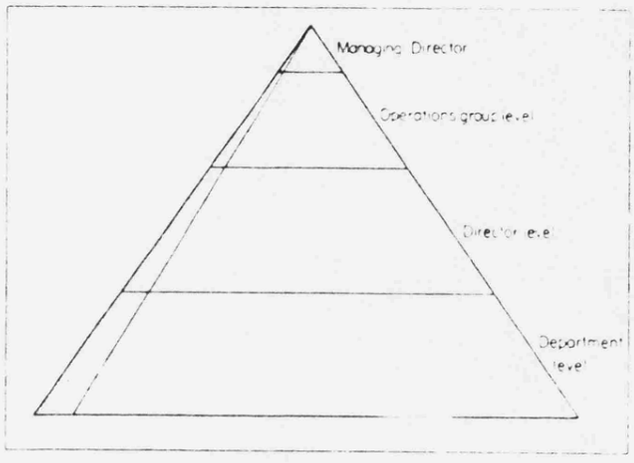
1. TO PREPARE FOR POSSIBLE STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS.

2. TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS.

Talk surrounding the slide depiction, however, made no reference to the company's fear. Its tone was not one of a company straining to keep control of its own affairs, of pre-emptive scurrying. No mention was made either of the perceived danger of an enforced participation scheme being made into a framework for the trade unions. Rather the tone was of a forward thinking, progressive company, in step with the times and making sensible preparations for anticipated events.

Point two on the slide reinforces a preferred relationship between participation and communication. The slippage of meaning following the first slide, particularly with the, almost unintended, 'influence', is reined-in here and brought back within familiar and preferred confines. The definitional struggle to confine meaning continues. The accompanying chat emphasised the importance of 'good communications' to the organisation. It was related to both improved work-related issues and also to an improved 'atmosphere', an understanding amongst members at all levels. (Here again, we can see how the current definition would lead naturally to certain criterion of evaluation).

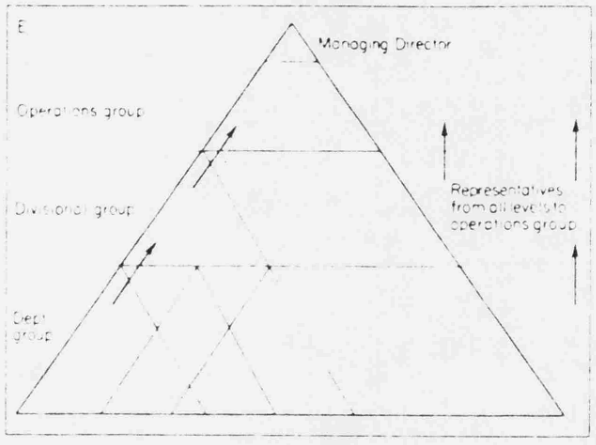
Perhaps the most significant portion of the presentation concerned Sherry's rather formalistic plans for the development of the scheme. He attempted to show to the audience where and how they fitted in to a more general scheme. The slides were designed to display how the existing and proposed structure of participation matched and fitted into the general structure of the organisation.



Slide 1 Chemical Plant Pilot Project The Thin Slice

This first slide illustrates the so-called 'thin slice' approach applied to the Chemical Plant Pilot Project. If the pyramid as a whole represents the overall organisational structure and its hierarchical levels - then the 'thin slice' on the left depicts the structure of the 'Chemical Plant Working Party'. (A word of explanation here. The 'Chemical Plant Working Party' consisted of T. Losthole (superceded by P. Sherry), Managing Director; MacHeath; the Chemical Plant Manager; the Section Head; the shift supervisor rep.; four shift operative reps. plus the university consultants. In other words members drawn from levels right up the company structure). Sherry made the obvious point that if the schemes development into other departments followed the same principle then his and other directors' time would be consumed in attending and chairing participation meetings. He therefore proposed a fresh structure to cope with the developing scheme. On this basis the Chemical Plant Group would be 'collapsed' into a departmental group chaired perhaps by the plant manager. Already a conception of a site-wide scheme was developing amongst Sherry and his directors' group. A second slide

depicted the envisaged progression to, and structure of, such a scheme.



Slide 2 Structure for expansion

The small pyramid in the bottom left hand corner of the larger may now be taken to represent the Chemical Plant Working Party collapsed to department level. Expansion of the scheme was considered to be in a horizontal direction at the next stage. Working Parties, or something similar, would be established in other departments within (preferably) the same divisional group as the Chemical Plant (namely Pharmaceutical Production). The intention then was to move up vertically at an appropriate point in time, to establish a divisional participation committee on which representatives from the groups at department level would sit. Following this, or with some degree of overlap, departmental groups would be established in other divisions with a movement towards the establishment of a divisional committee in similar fashion. Once all divisions had been encompassed in this structure then a higher-level, site-wide participation group would be established. On this would sit representatives from

each of the divisional committees.

Trouble had already been experienced in the Chamical Plant Working Party in handling issues that impinged on other departments, the division,or that had site-wide implications. The new structure was supposed to functionally cope with those difficulties. Issues would be progressed upwards, each level would have a mandate to consider and deal with issues pertinent to that level. Issues raised at department level that could be resolved at that level, would be. Issues outside the province of that level would be progressed vertically to divisional level or on to site-wide meetings if necessary.

Sherry spoke briefly about his personal 'commitment' to participation, how the Company was behind it; how it was a 'good' thing. He made reference to the slow progress that had been made in getting to the point at which they now stood. But, he felt, much had been 'learnt' from the 'Chemical Plant experience' that would be invaluable in the future development of the project. That development should now be 'speeded up' so that a site-wide system could be achieved as soon as possible.

He expressed the hope that members would enter into the scheme positively and take advantage of this pioneering exercise to the mutual benefit of all. He thanked the representatives for making themselves available and for attending the meeting.

This presentation represents one of the few occasions that a member of senior management presented a cohesive and structured view of what participation meant in the Tridy context to the workforce. A number of people said afterwards that the presentation had provided a good deal of clarification. Elsewhere the approach was much less direct and the onus often fell on the academic consultants. However, the impact of the presentation should not be undervalued,

coming especially as it did from the managing director himself. The presentation had already had a significant impact in other quarters (other management groups and the Chemical Plant Working Party). Its sense of purpose, its contextualising of the scheme, its structuring, had found favour with many. The consultants had been less happy. For them it represented an overly rational view of what had been a much 'messier' and feeling-the-way process. Some of these issues will be re-enacted shortly.

There is much to engage us in this presentation and it is difficult to know where to begin. The presentation was a significant 'event' in the definitional process. It acted to crystalise for many people amorphous meanings that had for some time been dispersed in the discourse. Its terms and images became an integral part of subsequent discourse. And despite the qualms of the consultants the structure outlined therein was one towards which the scheme inexorably proceeded. The consultants expressed fears that such a 'bureaucratisation' and formal structuring of the scheme might rigidify it, were perhaps born out. They also felt that a danger existed that the achievement of the plan would become an end in itself irrespective of the quality of the dialogue encased in the structure or what changes in human relations terms were being engendered or were being overlooked. This returns us to a point discussed earlier. Having defined the scheme in these terms,there arose a tendency to adopt evaluative postures in relation to that definition such that the achievement of the establishment of certain committees within certain time limits became the criteria for the success of the project. In other words, the scheme tended to be evaluated in terms of its adherence or deviation from this 'master plan'. Much of the consultants fears proved well founded, although saying that, glosses a

protracted interactional process between management and themselves in which much of the whole development and administration of the scheme was moulded. Certainly Sherry was not able to simply stamp the blueprint over the company. Particularly round the edges and on issues like timing, the consultants, and others within the company, were able to negotiate their own positions.

What it does most forcibly and most opportunely, in definitional terms, is to absolutely incorporate participation into the status quo. Participation is made into a structural framework that is laid over and covers, as it were, the structural framework of the company's overall organisation. That is participation is become structure - furthermore it has become a structure that matches and corresponds to the organisation structure. The structure of the participation system is made to map, perfectly the company's hierarchical power structure.

As a graphic metaphor the pyramid restates the hierarchical structure of the company's organisation. At the 'top' - the 'king of the castle' - is the managing director. As one goes <u>down</u>, <u>lower levels</u> of employees are encountered. The shop-floor is the floor of the pyramid. They are at the lowest point. The very word 'shop-floor' has particular connotations; in both its parts. A 'floor' is something upon which one walks. A shop is a place where commodities are bought and sold - the hiring and firing of labour. The top and bottom of it. The talk of 'levels' is here graphically represented. Each person belongs to his/her own level in the company. What determines that level? What else but the amount of power that person is expected or allowed to exercise. What other than that person's degree of involvement in various points of the decision-making process.

The turn here becomes slightly ironical. The pyramid charts

the positions of members ability to take part in decision-making processes. The pyramid, as a framework for participation wants to express a participative process in which it is assumed members will become more involved in all levels of organisational decision-making. The pyramid represents that traditional, power hierarchy; familiar and widely accepted. An arrangement etched into mundane industrial relations and organisational discourse. It depicts increasing rights of control, decision-making, punishment and reward as one ascends. It depicts the divine right of managing directors esconced at the top of the pile, enthroned at the apex. Participation is talked about, at Tridy as well as elsewhere, as an involvement, a sharing, a decision-making parity, absence of unilateralism, the establishment of a Republic, a flattening of the pyramid. The use of the pyramid to describe the structure of participation is somewhat undermined as a rhetoric by the realisation of the reliance of that metaphor on the traditions of unilateralism, hierarchy, control and dominance.

However, that clattering of images does little to obviate another enormous subtlely of the presentation. The contradiction is only apparent when the pyramidial structure of organisations is taken as non-natural and when certain meanings of participation are allowed to play. What is being exploited here is an assumed shared ideology that essentially allows organisations as hierarchical pyramides to be seen as wholly natural. Organisations are, simply just like that. That kind of structure is an inevitable, expected and acceptable one. So much so that it is taken for granted and its implications of control, dominance, punishment and reward are unheeded. The presenter makes the assumption here that the pyramid is acceptable and familiar, he hopes to exploit the background expectancies of the audience.

The presentation further relies on the fact that meanings of participation with Pencham have not been allowed to procreate ad lib,

but had circulated within carefully marked, if semi-porous, boundaries. The notion remains nebulous; the audience are still, to that extent, maleable. They remain receptive to assertive definitions of participation. Meanings that run strictly counter to the pyramid image have not fully emerged, or if they have emerged, have not been allowed to bed down. This is particularly so in relation to the Packaging Department representatives, who, as we have seen, like other shop-floor members were largely unfamiliar with any discourse that included participation.

What is achieved, or is achievable, in this presentation in terms of the continuing definitional process is an infibulation of participation into the traditional hierarchical organisation of the company. The existing structure retrieves participation and secures it to itself. The two become alloyed, bonded by a firm relationship, strengthened by the laying of one over the other in correspondence - identical Siamese twins whose every movement creates a need for a reciprocal movement in the other. Participations' otherness is diminished. Its unfamiliarity, its potential for chaos and disruption is repaired by this act of inclusion. It is recuperated from the darkness and brought into the warmth, comfort and light of a well-established, well-known, well-ordered, easily digestible structure.

It operates effectively as a short-cut. It by-passes a great deal of interactional work by which signifiers of participation are gradually associated with those of various company practices, structures and philosophies. At a stroke, the presentation incorporates all these potential networks by tying participation directly to the overall structure of the company. The relationship: participation - (existing) company structure is firmly established.

The presentation also serves to encase participation in a rhetoric of order and rationality. The fluctuating, emergent qualities of the definitional process are here reduced to a coherent orderliness. Process is transposed into structure. The convolutions of the tangled, intermittent definitional process in which the meanings of participation had been emerging and drifting away are ironed out and laid out flat (literally) before a credulous audience. Coherence and rationality are firmly re-established. The unease derived from the very ambiguity and dispersed quality of participation is ameliorated by the geometric precision of the images and by its conflation with a familiar organisational discourse. Again there is an exploitation of certain background expectancies. Organisations, in common discourse, are supposedly characterised by a sense of order and by the establishment and implementation of plans and policies. If participation is to be a part of the activities of the company then it is to be expected that it would accommodate itself to that ethos.

Sherry is also here exhibiting his managerial credentials. The presentation serves established organisational purposes. Managers should order and guide things - it is their task; their style to present things in succinct, organisationally sanctioned ways. He is making tangible and sensible for others what must have until then, for many, appeared vague and lacking direction and purpose. In presenting things in this way, Sherry is visibly seen to be fulfilling his managerial obligations. Part of the meaning of the presentation is taken up by this contextualisation. As is the fact that Sherry was only fairly recently appointed managing director and there are elements of assertions of authority, of assuming a creditable captain's posture, and a display of managerial pyrotechnics.

Whilst subsequently talk about participation somewhat mollified, what for some, was an overly structural, rigid,'blueprint' presentation (this modified talk, even from Sherry being fostered by the academic consultants) its definitional impact cannot be underestimated. Not only was participation overtly defined in particular ways, but, perhaps more importantly, Sherry had provided, what might be termed, a definitional frame, for others. Here was an encompassing, metaperspective from which future participation discourse could be viewed and analysed. The scheme was given an overall structure and plan, with a specific end-point established. Not only did it provide for people a graspable linguistic frame in which talk about participation could be caste; it also provided a language and a means of evaluation. Although subsequent presentations were couched in terms of'this is only one option', 'we want your views' and picturesquely 'these triangles should be seen as a rubber framework'; the fact remains that (as the last quote makes clear) a framework had been provided. This provision was impactful for the reasons already outlined, but also because it was a framework that appeared in a situation where there was a dearth of alternatives.

Briefing : 09:00 Hours

Just prior to the commencement of the establishment of the Packaging Department Participation Group, the company took an unprecedented step of briefing the whole Pencham workforce 'concerning progress to date and future actions relating to worker participation'. The personnel department issued a 'Briefing Guideline' to all Directors and Managers on the site, the text of which is reproduced here.

To: DIRECTORS / MANAGERS

From: Personnel Department
Date: 18th October

1 BRIEFING GUIDELINE

2 Brief down to: ALL EMPLOYEES

3 URGENT - Commence 09.00 hrs. 20.10.** end
Friday 21.10.** plus shift a.s.a.p.
4 NOTE This text is issued as a guide to
Directors and Managers involved in
5 briefing staff under their control.

6 It should not be read out to staff, but
used as a quick guide a) prior to the
7 briefing meeting, and b) during the
meeting as a discreet check.

8 As far as possible brief the matter in
your own words with normal style and
9 phraseology so that your discussion is
natural, EXCEPT that certain words and
10 phrases in the written text are under-
lined; these should be retained in
your own version intact, since they are
more critical in retaining the correct
emphasis or interpretation in the matter.

SUBJECT: WORKER PARTICIPATION

An experiment in worker participation has been taking
15 place in the Chemical Plant for the past eighteen months. Its
purpose has been to enable employees to take a more active part in
influencing decisions which affect their day to day working in the
Company. In addition, the aim has been to improve communications
20 and to achieve a better understanding between all levels within
the plant of each other's problems.

An important part of the project has been the continuing assistance
of Professor I.L. Hamming, Dr. H. Kirknatch, both of the Applied
25 Industrial Relations Centre, at Wellingham University. They are
acknowledged authorities in this field.

The results of the experiment to date have been encouraging and
a decision has been made to extend
30 the scope of the experiment. Because it offers some important
differences in work population and environment to that of the
Chemical Plant, the Packaging Area has been chosen for this
extension of the experiment. As you know, the Chemical Plant is an
35 area where we have continuous shift operations and this has given
us good experience with solving problems particular to that environ-
ment. With the Packaging Area, its larger number of employees
and the nature of the work, we can gain experience in an
40 environment which is more typical of some of our other factory
operations.

It is hoped that the benefits which have occurred in the Chemical Plant will be repeated here and every effort will be made to accelerate this new phase of the project whilst bearing in mind the need to evolve a participation system suited to this different group. If the results prove favourable it is the intention to extend participation to all parts of the Company within the next twelve months.

I.L. Hamming will be on site within the next week and will be spending some time with us to discuss the principles and ways and means to participation.

With the broader and continuing successful introduction of worker participation we will be in the forefront in adopting the best of current practice in industry.

It will also provide an opportunity to re-emphasise, in practical terms, the Company's belief that the solving of any individual employee or work problems is best done in a climate of frank, open and informal discussion.

In many areas we are already adopting varying forms of participation. Naturally such activity should continue and be encouraged by all of us.

That briefing represents another significant step in the definitional process, particularly since it is one of the few occasions when the senior management communicated its perceptions of participation to the whole workforce.

The guideline had to achieve certain organisational purposes. In the first instance rumour had become rife in the absence of concrete information. The unreliability and distorting effects of the organisation's grapevine were perceived as being in need of corrective treatment. Misinterpretations and escalating expectations were now considered to require a more official counterpoint. Secondly, concern was increasingly expressed amongst sections of the workforce that those already engaged in the scheme were in a privileged position. However participation was defined by the general body of employees, they were aware that some of their colleagues were enjoying a relationship with management to which they were not a party. Questions were beginning to be asked about why those departments had been singled out and when/or would their own departments get the opportunity to become involved.

Perhaps one of the first things to be noted about the briefing is its rather militaristic tone. The staccato prose; the use of the twenty-four hour clock; the commanding temper; its pithiness. The document is a guideline to managers and directors on how to conduct a briefing to their employees. It has the tenor of a military campaign briefing. It expresses the organisational values of efficiency, dynamism and clarity. Again there is some disparity here between the tone and the subject matter. A dictatorial edict on the subject of participation.

It is, further, a small-scale example of strict, almost coercive attempts to control definition. Although the briefing is to be conducted verbally in the directors/managers 'own words with

normal style and phraseology' it is made clear that 'certain words and phrases' should be 'retained intact', 'since they are critical in retaining the correct emphasis or interpretation in the matter'. This is an attitude that concurs with the fascistic conception that if you can control words you can control meaning and interpretation. It represents an overt attempt to close-off meaning, to ensure the encasement of meaning within specific bounds. It further supports that view of language and meaning in which sense is seen in terms of communication of a message from sender to passive receiver. If the message is controlled it will be received untrammeled at its point of reception.

The attempt to control language here is an example of what Claus Mueller (1973) designates as 'distorted communication' defined as:

> "all forms of restricted and prejudiced communication that by their nature inhibit a full discussion of problems, issues and ideas that have public relevence" (p.19)

It also exhibits aspects of a further delineation of 'distorted communication' made by Mueller. He establishes three forms of distorted communication, two of which are applicable here (the third too is applicable to the Tridy context and will be encountered later). Firstly, this briefing, and much of the company's attempts to define participation, is characterised by 'directed communication'. That is an attempt by those in positions of authority (in Mueller's examples state governments) to <u>structure</u> language and communication. Secondly, 'constrained communication' denotes successful attempts by interest groups to structure and <u>limit</u> public communication in order that their interests prevail.

Extreme versions of directed communication are cited by Mueller (see especially pp.26-41) with reference to Germany during the Third Reich and post-war East Germany. Under the National Socialists the nation's lexicography was re-written. Words were given fresh, ideologically appropriate, definitions and old ones were deleted. New words were introduced to provide a new power to the political and ideological discourse. The most striking examples emanated from the Office of the Press concerning directives on the use or otherwise of terms in newspaper writing. These were originally referred to as Language Regulations but later changed to 'Daily Directives from the Secretary of the Press'. Mueller provides numerous audacious and illuminating examples; here are a small sample:

"Jan. 6 1936 — It should be pointed out that there is a new style, 'the German style' which is based on the (German) relationship to race. The term 'German style' has to be entered into the public consciousness."

"Aug. 22 1936 — The 'Fuhrer' has ordered that in the future the term 'victims (Gefalhene) of the movement' must be replaced by 'the assassinated of the movement'. This will make it clear that the National Socialist fighters did not lose their life to honest enemies, but to hideous murderers'."

"Jan. 14 1957 — The concept 'race' cannot be used for advertising. It is not permissible to use the term to promote a new style of hat or an automobile engine."

"Dec. 13 1937 — The urgent directive has been given that the term 'League of Nations' can no longer be used by the German Press as of today. This word no longer exists."

"Sept. 1 1939 — The word 'war' has to be avoided in all news coverage and editorials. Germany is repulsing a Polish attack."

"Oct. 16 1941 There should be no more references to Soviet or Soviet Russian soldiers. At most they can be called Soviet army members (Sovietarmisten) or just simply Bolsheviks, beasts, and animals."

"March 16 1941 The Secretary of Propaganda and People's Enlightenment has requested that the term 'catastrophe' be completely deleted from the German language. It has therefore been decided that the word 'catastrophe' be replaced by the term 'large emergency' and 'catastrophe aid' by 'air war aid'."

(my emphasis throughout)

These astonishing examples speak for themselves and need no commentary. The obvious question is whether such naked violence to a language is or was effective. Mueller wants to say that given the circumstances in Germany at the time, the manipulation of language in this way must have invaded everyday discourse. He does concede, however, that "it has proven impossible to measure ex post facto the efficiency of the distortion of language during the National Socialist era, this question will remain empirically unanswerable."

In his consideration of the example of East Germany, Mueller refers to the arch activities of the 'Section for Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee of the Socialist Party". Language had to be purged of fascist contamination and purified by conformity to sound Marxist and socialist ideology. The 'Section' exerted influence over the press, over educational programmes, over official dictionaries and, of course, all government announcements and publications. Mueller's best examples of this totalitarianism derive from a comparison of dictionaries of West and East Germany. Most pointedly, he cites two studies by Betz and Moser in which comparisons were made between the East German Duden (the standard German language dictionary) published in 1957 with the West German Duden of

1961. Some examples are cited below:

Term	East German Definition	West German Definition
Determinismus (deteriminism)	"doctrine stipulating the objective regularities and causal determination of all phenomena pertaining to nature and society"	"doctrine stipulating the non-existence of free-will"
Opportunismus (opportunism)	"absence of moral principles; the retreat from difficulties; adjustment to changing (political) situations; ... the subordination of the class interests of the proletariat to the interests of the bourgeoisie."	"adjustment to changing situations; behaviour springing from pragmatism."
Verelendung (pauperization)	"constant process of deterioration in the conditions of workers under capitalism."	No entry

Betz and Moser's studies also reveal how terms become redefined in successive entries in dictionaries in politically appropriate ways. For instance, the word 'agitieren' (to agitate) went through the following transformation: 'to recruit' (1951); 'to enlighten, to recruit' (1954); ' to enlighten, to recruit for a party, for a progressive movement, to recruit (a person) in an enlightening way, to (accept) a (political) conviction'. 'Parliamentarismus' (parliamentary form of government) was defined in 1951 and 1954 as, 'restrictions of democratic actions to the activities of a parliament', but in 1957 as 'bourgeoise form of government in which the parliament formally determines policy'.

This extensive diversion is not intended to imply that the executive group of Tridy were necessarily engaged in a covert Machiavellian manipulation of language in an attempt to expressly control the minds of the workers. Rather there is a use of language

that reflects and matches an underlying ideology. There is a more or less natural inclination to attempt to retain control over the definition of company policy and those things that are seen as important to the company's interests. The choice of language here, and the method of its presentation is as much a reflection of a belief in an expressive-realist theory of language, meaning and communication, as it is a reflection of a reactionary or totalitarian political ideology. However, I do not wish to be over protective in relation to senior managers at Tridy. The choice of terms, its assemblage and presentation, the open dictats and sanctionable guidance of language-use should not be viewed naively as mere coincidences of established organisational practices. The company here is specifically proferring some preferred meanings of participation as part of a wider attempt to gain ascendency for a definition that protects their interests. By implication, other, alternative meanings are being excluded. Again the company is attempting to provide a definitional framework, especially when one considers the definitional vacuum said to be apparent amongst most of the workforce. Amongst the majority of the workforce discourse surrounding participation was singularly unsophisticated. Notions hovered unconnected, its relationships of meaning were at best tenuous and scattered. Here the company provides specific networks and an organising frame. It also, by the control exercised over the form and content of the official statement reinforces certain arrangements of signifiers whilst avoiding others and banishing or partially banning others.

From the content of the briefing it is quickly apparent that the nature of managerial discourse has moved on by degrees from those earlier, cautious days. "Participation' as an expression is no longer avoided but is presented 'up-front'. Another significant movement in the emergent nature of meanings is the more positive

association between participation and decision-making; with that between participation and communication being reduced to a more secondary position (lines 16-19). But involvement in the decision-making is still confined to 'influencing', there is no indication of actual sharing in decision-making or taking full or partial responsibility for decisions made. This influence too is confined only to those decisions 'which affect their day-to-day working in the company'. Whilst it might be argued that issues of company policy, budgetry decisions, major acquisitions, grading systems may affect an employee's day-to-day work, the clear implication is that participation here involves the 'immediate' side of the 'immediate-distant' distinction of participation (Strauss, G. & Rosenstein, E. 1970). That is, the company, is trying to define participation in terms of involvement in matters concerning their everyday work, of matters that impinge immediately on their working practices and conditions, rather than in terms of involvement in higher level company decisions. The involvement in decisions is watered down by the syntagmatic relation with 'improving communications' and achieving 'a better understanding between all levels'.

Note that even at this well advanced stage the scheme is still referred to as 'an experiment' (lines 14:28:30:34). Some of the connotations of this nomenclature have been explored previously. The language of science and experimentation takes over again; such that the document is able to refer to the 'results' of the experiment as if quantifiable measures had been taken. Note that the company are keen to retain this sense of experiment; the phrase 'to extend the scope of the experiment' has been singled out for verbatim coverage. The company clearly wants to continue to engender the potential temporariness of the exercise. An 'experiment' is contingent upon its 'results', if an 'experiment' is shown not to work then

nothing really has been lost and things can return to normal.

The sense of experiment is buttressed by reference to the academic consultants. They are referred to with full titular honours and cited in relation to their scholarly habitat. 'They are acknowledged authorities in this field'. This confederacy of signifiers restates the serious, scientific connotations of 'experiment'. It lends a credibility to the scheme. The 'experiment' is not some half-cocked escapade concocted by management, but a rigorous and rational exercise backed and supported by external 'experts'.

The language of evaluation reappears in this text too and is as singularly vague as elsewhere. Mention has already been made of 'the results of the experiment' (line 28) which are further said to 'have been encouraging' (lines 28-29). Reference is made to 'solving problems (particular to that environment)' (lines 36-37) which, although again, is extremely vague, does give further intimations of localised participation confined to issues relating to particular regions of the company. The confinement is not simply geographical, but also in terms of the nature of the issues raised; their scope. A little later (line 42) mention is made of the 'benefits' of participation 'which have occurred in the Chemical Plant' although what those 'benefits' might be is not made clear. Such expressions can only presumably be related to the espoused purposes stated at the beginning of the briefing (lines 16-21). One may sensibly ask in relation to this non-specific evaluation, ''encouraging' for whom?'; 'whose 'problems'?'; ''benefits' for whom?'. The question assumes importance when one considers that the continuation and extension of the 'experiment' is dependent on the 'results' proving 'favourable'. (lines 47-8).

The company promises to deliver unto the whole population an

opportunity to take part in this new, innovating and exciting scheme. A scheme that offers certain goodies; a dissolution of problems, improvements, benefits and greater understanding. But this deliverence is contingent upon, again, unspecified things. The point is made fairly clear that the company retains control over the scheme, its phasing, its scope, its very existence. That existence is dependent upon outcomes and standards that are also in the control of management. The criteria of evaluation and the means of its accomplishment are retained by management, workers perception and own monitoring of these processes are obscured by an archly vague language.

The paradox of participation is once again encountered. The talk of greater involvement and of influencing decisions is juxtaposed with a language of control and unilateralism. For instance 'a decision has been made ...' (line 29) and 'the Packaging Area has been chosen ..' (lines 32-4). The planning, development and progress of the scheme, and all decisions relating to it, are firmly in the hands of the senior management team.

There is a recurring rhetoric of flexibility, of seeking out people's views, of developing a scheme in line with employees expressed needs and wishes. But this rhetoric runs counter to the practices and much of the other language of management. Plans were most often hatched in camera and decisions relating to development simply communicated to the workforce. Caveats were attached to the effect that what was being proposed was a 'suggestion only' and that members need not take part. However acquiescence was expected and generally obtained. The achievement of such compliance and collusion is part of what this thesis seeks to explore, if not directly confront.

The document talks (line 45-6) of 'the need to evolve a participation system suited to this different group'. This quote demonstrates the intertextuality of much of the discourse. The academic consultants had spoken often and at length of their belief in a gradualist, evolving participation process, sensitive to the needs and requirements of the workforce as opposed to the imposition of a pre-formed blueprint structural plan. Such language percolates their texts but also the texts of senior management and the personnel department. Company texts do not embody quotes from academic texts, or even a general common language, that retains in tacto the same sense. The employment of the same words and phrases does not in any way ensure a repitition of meaning. The re-occurrence of 'evolve' in company texts need not imply that its meaning there matches in any way its meaning(s) in academic texts. However company texts perpetually display portions of discourse that precipitate the afterimage of discourses elsewhere and from previous times. The meanings discoverable in this instance are irretrievably tied to the context in which they appear, including the specific text-reader relationship embodied. However the repetition of terms and like terms, and a concomitant establishment and re-establishment of certain relationships gives rise to a certain contour of discourse, characterised more by that which is significantly and repititiously absent than by any solid and stable series of linear relationships.

More pragmatically, the use of such expressions as 'evolve' etc. in company texts, serves the purpose of demonstrating to the academics that the management remain in tune with them. The rhetoric then is not simply aimed at the workforce, but is made to serve their purposes.

Lines 53-54 are of particular rhetorical interest. It should be born in mind that this document (or at least the briefing it is its job to guide) is an attempt by the company to explain to the whole workforce the company's thinking on participation and its development at Pencham. The very fact that such a briefing exercise was undertaken shows that there was a feeling amongst management that the workforce were in some need of persuasion. Indeed, it has a slight air of a sales pitch. Part of the document's function is to portray the benefits of participation and to show to the workforce that they are employed by a company that involves itself in such valuable and 'good' practices. The latter part of the paragraph further tries to link the company and participation with a forward-looking and intelligent attitude. The latter part of the sentence reverberates with certain aspects of the company's values and culture that were alluded to much earlier. The company is in the 'forefront' and adopts 'the best of current practice in industry'. Participation is here again being associated with a forward-thinking, progressive company. Participation is being aligned with these espoused company values of progressiveness, modernism, dynamism and the 'American way'. The language here recalls too that portion of the discourse that has the company in step with the march of history, indeed being one jump ahead of events occurring in the wider world. The company, by adopting 'participation' is bringing to its workforce, the best and the most up-to-date.

The inherent paternalism implied above is reiterated in the subsequent sentence (lines 56-59). It was an integral part of managerial discourse to refer to the company as a 'caring company', one that looked after the interests and welfare of its workforce. More than one senior manager, including the managing director, had expressly acknowledged its paternalism. Indeed the sentence

esconsed in this text mirrors sections from other texts referring to company policy on grievance and disciplinary procedures and industrial relations policy:

> "It gave us an excellent opportunity to formalise our procedures on grievance and discipline to reflect the Company policy of concern for the individual and the creation of (an) open atmosphere for the discussion of individual grievances."

and

> "Satisfactory working relationships depend to a great degree on understanding among people. Good relationships are usually easier to achieve in an open atmosphere, where problems and opinions are discussed freely, frankly and sincerely. The Company encourages all its people to conduct their daily affairs in this manner."

Here the rhetoric of caring etc. resides dangerously close to a language that reveals the reality of punishment and of control. But then fathers discipline their children as well as tend and care for them.

Talk about participation is being emeshed in this wider company discourse of care and paternalism. It is being made to fit into existing company philosophy and practice. It has already been integrated into a language of organisational structure, now it is being captured and held in another network of relationships that are said to already exist in the company. Participation is made familiar, comfortable and non-threatening. It is shown to be not an alien and unusual practice, but something that fits in readily with long established ways of doing and talking. Again it is linked only with the mundane practice of 'informal discussion'. Sensible, controlled and adult.

The sense of participation being merely a continuance of extant practices, with perhaps only a shift of emphasis, is bolstered by the last paragraph of the document (lines 60-2). In many dis-

cussions with managers and supervisors the view was expressed that they were already participating. Of course, a definition of participation in terms of communication and discussion allows such assertions to have credence. The document openly recognises the vagueness of the term here by mention of 'varying forms of participation'. This vagueness and ambiguity is exploited at many turns in the discourse on participation at Pencham. Here it allows participation to cohabit with varying existing company practices and philosophies. Strategically, such an act of recuperation, further binds participation within certain linguistic boundaries; its meanings are allowed to be many, but the relations of difference are not allowed to escalate to the point where they manifest too obviously contradictory positions vis-a-vis established company doctrine. The run of meaning is controlled and bounded.

Talking to shop-floor workers very shortly after the briefing session it soon became apparent that the effort to control meaning and impart a uniform message had not been totally successful. As might be expected uniformity across presentations proved impossible to achieve. However, more significantly, certain managers took the opportunity to impart different meanings and to further attempt to control the definition of participation. The workforce indicated that there was a variety in the message they received. Or rather, the militarism had failed to ensure a uniformity of meaning. Both in the presentation and in its interpretation by hearers, the text had revealed its productivity and differing meanings emerged. To some degree the deviation from the written document was the result of the interpretive work of the audience. But also deviations stemmed from tinkering by these managers and directors making the presentation.

Managers and directors reported back that the briefing sessions had proceeded as expected and that the workforce had not expressed any reservations about what was being proposed. The workforce however reported that they felt obliged to keep silent - they did not want to appear as 'troublemakers'. They also said that they felt that the briefing was put in such a way that they were being cast in the position of being expected to accept the view of the scheme being put forward. The situation was not perceived as one of debate and dialogue. Rather they felt that they were being positioned to accept what had already been decided upon by management. What was taking place fitted into a traditional pattern in which management decided and then informed the workforce of what was to take place. Participation was being incorporated into this familiar pattern. It required a passive workforce that would acquiesce to managerial authority.

More overt attempts to control the definition of the situation were also apparent. For instance shop-floor members reported that they had been told that certain issues were not available for discussion under participation - pay, for example. They felt that management had already decided the boundaries of permissible debate and that 'they would only talk about what they wanted to talk about'. Some were further led to believe that if and when a committee was established, management would retain control over the constitution and make-up of that committee. It was also suggested that members would not be elected but nominated.

It might be suggested that in this instance, the careful rhetoric of the briefing document had been somewhat undercut by the embellishments of the presenters. It was the tone and additions put forward by the briefing managers and directors (or at least some of them) that had created a degree of alarm. The consultants attempted

to repair the damage by emphasising that members did have a choice and could opt out of the scheme altogether. They also reassured members that the process and format of the scheme would be sensitive to an input from them. At least the consultants were encouraging the workforce to take a more active part in the definitional process.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONSULTANTS

Apart from the formal presentations of the scheme by management, definitions of participation also began to emerge in the continuing discussions between the academic consultants and the shop-floor members. Much of these sessions were characterised by an initial explanation of who the academic consultants were, where they came from and what they were doing in the company. They made it clear that they did not consider themselves to be part of management and assured the workforce that whatever they had to say would be treated in the strictest confidence. They went on to explain some of the details of the Chemical Plant experiment and how they saw participation in the Pencham context generally.

To some degree then, the consultants too were presenting a particular range of definitions. This proactive stance was partially made necessary by the lack of familiarity with a discourse of participation amongst the shop-floor. If the consultants had merely gone in and said 'let's talk about participation' and attempted to allow meanings and conceptions to emerge from the shop-floor, lengthy silences would certainly have ensued (and did when such a style was tried). Discussion was initiated by the consultants in ways that would prove meaningful to the workforce at that stage. Talk rounded on those areas that related to members daily work practices and relationships. The consultants rapidly learnt what areas of discourse they could employ that would trip a verbal torrent from the members. The talk here, then, is very context-specific and generally was only tangental to the issue of participation. Periodically the consultants would overtly reintroduce the subject. In some senses the meanings of participation emerging from these dialogues were highly situation

specific. In other ways the consultants stood back and delivered a coherent presentation of their conception of participation. Much of the material relating to these discussions has already been encountered in the analyses of workers attitudes to the company and then preliminary postures in relation to participation.

Here I shall attempt to give only a flavour of some of the meanings developed in those discussions without going into a lengthy analysis.

In many areas the meanings emanating from the consultants matched those presented by management. This is not a cause for surprise since much of management's discourse overlaps with that of the consultants and is partially a result of an interactive dynamic between the two. Thus participation is caste in terms of a variety of terms already seen to be circulating amongst management and presented by management to the workforce.

Much of the talk centred on the desirability and feasibility of achieving better relations with supervision and management. Invariably this was couched in terms of the quality/existence of effective meetings and the need to attain them. Lack of meetings, both formal and informal, was seen negatively, and the move to more effective meetings as a positive step and part of what participation was about. Generally participation was linked with efforts to alleviate any strains in relations between the workforce and supervision. More generally relations were established between participation and improvements in communications, a higher level of involvement, improved understanding and a sharing of information.

> H.K. "We're trying to improve communication and information between levels - so that you don't get to hear everything by rumour."

Generally it was not a question of the consultants simply saying that 'participation means or entails this and that', rather that, in generating discussion, questions were put to the workforce in terms of existing levels of involvement, or the problems of lack of information, or the desire for improved communications, and so forth. The relationship - 'participation-communication' was not always explicitly presented (although occasionally it was, as the above quote suggests) - rather the relationships were established syntagmatically and more subtlely.

The promise was profferred in these discussions that participation would aid in the 'alleviation of problems'. As already mentioned, one 'problem' area where positive effects were expected to accrue, concerned shop-floor - supervisory/management relationships. Wider claims were made in terms of the 'resolution of issues', or the consideration and righting of 'grievances'. The issues and grievances were those referred to by the workforce. Participation was put forward then, as a possible means of dealing with issues and of helping to get problems sorted out. This healing ability circulated with these other meanings of improved communications and greater involvement.

> H.K. "These are the types of issues we hope can be resolved by a scheme such as this. We hope to get you more influence in handling these issues. We are looking for an exchange of ideas - a two-way affair."

This latter reintroduces the notions of open 'discussions' - a polite debate and resolution of differences - a moving together of two unnaturally divided sections of what, could, and should be a more cohesive group. Communications should be two-way it is suggested, not simply transmitted down to the workforce from above. A reduction of the (proverbial) 'them-and-us' conception of workplace relations.

The notion of 'an exchange of ideas' indexes a view of, and by, the workforce that they represented an under utilised organisational resource; that their ideas should be listened to and allowed to make a valuable contribution to work-related matters.

Following from the last point; much of the conversations turned around immediate 'hygiene' issues raised by the workforce relating to day-to-day work practices and arrangements. Partly as a response to this and partly as a continuance of an already established relationship, participation was related to the 'local' end of the local-distant continuum. The consultants concurred (in this setting at least) with the management presentation in terms of participation dealing with those areas of concern associated with the immediate work situation:

> H.K. "As we found in the Chemical Plant, we want to talk about changes that affect you in your immediate job and improve communication."

and

> H.K. "Can you think of any way of improving the job?"
>
> Op. "It would be better if the machines worked O.K. - they're always breaking down."
>
> H.K. "Do you think you ought to have your ideas listened to with regard to things like new machines?"
>
> Op. "Yes. We do get to know the jobs and the machines; perhaps things the buyers don't know."
>
> L.A. Hamming "Do you ever discuss these issues?"
>
> Op. "We never get a chance to."

However a secondary association repositions this first. Although discourse moved around 'local' immediate-work-situation issues, working conditions, superior-subordinate relations, unfair or inefficient work practices - the consultants were quick to sever any

relationship between participation and a forum for the workforce to 'vent its gripes'. Participation was to be associated with positive, constructive contributions, not a negative sniping at management, nor a passive cataloguing of problems.

> L.A.H. "We don't want it to be seen merely as a platform for moaning and groaning - really its an exercise in sharing information and getting better understanding. We want issues to be raised and a genuine attempt to resolve them."

Once again the conception of participation involving formal meetings of members from different hierarchical levels of the company was readily presented and accepted. As was the notion of the establishment of a representational system, with the accompanying practice of electing committee members to represent the working public. Participation was already linked to at least this structural template of the organisation. Members of management and workforce would meet in some group or committee form - a tacit acceptance of the existence of the hierarchical power structure of the company. Whilst shop-floor members expressed a good deal of concern that this representational system be equitable, it was never challenged in principle. Participation was firmly associated with representation, with elections, with hierarchy, with meetings.

The consultants introduced certain other relationships that are closely inter-related and are revealed in the following exchange.

After an introductory explanation of the type already indicated, Kirknatch put the question:

> "Do you think it's a good idea?"
>
> Op. "Yes, generally - but it depends on how its done. How is the committee to be formed for instance?"
>
> H.K. "That's not decided yet until we hear what people want." (But he goes on to give examples from the Chemical Plant).

Op. "We understand from P. Austin (Dept. Manager) that this experimental committee is not going to be as high-powered as that in the Chemical Plant."

H.K. "It's really not been worked out yet."

Op. "The idea is O.K. as long as it's going to be constructive. We noticed that at the Chemical Plant there is a 6:4 ratio in favour of management - do the operatives get put down? That's what happens here now, we are free to bring anything up, but things don't get done."....

H.K. "Whatever system you get, the managers' prerogative is still there, but participation cuts down the likelihood of unilateral decisions. The thing is people should be made to give reasons for their decisions. Just saying 'no' or presenting a decision is not enough - the reasons behind it should be made clear. It may be the case that once the reasons have been explained you will be able to see their position - you may not necessarily agree - but at least you'll understand why."

Op. "It would be helpful to have someone who is outside the section and unbiased - someone like Losthole who used to attend the Chemical Plant meetings. We won't get someone like that though."

H.K. "What sort of person would you want?"

Op. "We want a 50:50 arrangement and then if there is a stale-mate - some way of taking the issue higher. It is often the case now that even if a grievance is just, and is recognised as just by all concerned, we still get the argument 'it's not company policy' thrown at us - and the issue stops at that. The idea of someone like Losthole is useful."

H.K. "Yes but even he gets blocked. But the idea is that someone like him can go off between meetings and seek someone who will make a decision or at least someone who is prepared to give reasons. We want to get people to actually listen, not just hear; even if they don't agree at least there is an element of understanding."

Op. "What about the problem of the power to veto?"

H.K. "I don't really know how to get out of that."

Op. "If we had a 50:50 set up then at least any disagreements would be forced outside the department - which is important for us."

H.K. "Yes, but management will <u>still</u> have the veto."

The broad interest of this exchange is the push and pull around the interpretation of a representational system. This particular group of workers (actually a group of maintenance engineers servicing the packaging department - so not typical of the whole department) were tending to interpret a representational democratic system literally. They wanted an elected assembly with equal membership from the management and workforce sides. More importantly, they seemed to anticipate a decision-making process that involved voting procedures or some sort of quasi-voting procedure. The issue of voting rights had not significantly entered the participation discourse before this point. The consultants were keen to play down the importance of such formality - even asserting that "numbers don't really matter that much." They also counteracted this move by the engineers by displaying the reality of the continuing disparity of power. Management prerogatives will still be in evidence - even with voting rights the ultimate authority to make decisions is retained by management. In this interchange, participation is differentiated from power-sharing or from any form of workforce control or parity in the decision-making process. Participation cannot be expected, at least not immediately, to fundamentally undermine the bastions of management privilege. The stance being adopted by the engineers was possibly perceived as leading towards an openly confrontational scenario, something that management and the consultants discourse had sought to avoid. Such a movement could too readily lead to an open challenge to the power structure of the company and an aggressive questioning of managerial prerogatives.

Revealed too in this dialogue is direct reference to the confusion engendered by the briefing exercise. Austin, the Department Manager responsible for the briefing, had clearly interpreted the briefing document ideosyncratically. He had attempted to draw

boundaries around participation. In fact he had succeeded in opening a dangerous Pandora's box.

This particular group of the workforce had, like others, readily accepted the presented view of participation that portrayed it as a representational structure. Their prime concern was then focused on the format of that structure. Perhaps more than most other groups they confront the power implications of such a structure and attempt to frame it in such a way that they can enter the power arena of decision-making by incorporating voting rights. However they reveal a collusion with the ultimate legitimacy of the hierarchy by putting faith in an appeal beyond their immediate work environment direct to the managing director. The blockers and filterers of their aspirations are located within their department. They seem to expect adequate redress if they are permitted to present their problems to the managing director or some other luminary. They have identified at least one of the blocking tactics within their departments as that of a stonewalling reference to 'company policy'. The implication they have drawn is that if they can obtain access to the managing director that block can no longer apply since he is the arbiter of company policy. The consultants point out that the managing director is not omnipotent, that he too might be constrained by company policy from elsewhere.

In the absence of an ability to by-pass the realities of the power hierarchy, the talk here reintroduces that discourse that links participation with <u>understanding</u>, with an <u>exchange of views</u>, with a <u>discussion</u> in which <u>both sides</u> of <u>the argument</u> are put. The consultants are here reining-in a run of meanings associated with participation that they perceive as heading dangerously on a confrontation course and which is moving in a direction counter to that prevailing amongst management. At a secondary level they are

forewarning the workforce not to expect too much. They are pointing out the realities of hierarchy, control and dominance that they suspect participation (at this stage at least) will be unable to penetrate. Elsewhere in this series of exchanges the consultants are again keen to control expectations, to put the exercise in a lower key. They urge the workforce to 'take it steady' to start with, not to confront the central issues of power, but, along with management's definition, to concentrate on issues of local participation - work related, day-to-day problems.

Kirknatch's first extensive diatribe highlights a further relationship with participation that was made much of in these exchanges. 'People should be made to give reasons for their decisions'. This 'participation-reasons' relationship was reiterated quite frequently. Participation is about people (management) being obliged to give reasons for their decisions. The power to make decisions still resides with management. The ability to make unilateral decisions in complete isolation is what is being challenged. These decisions must be accompanied by reasons. The implication is that decisions must be justified and made accountable. However it is made clear that even when justifications are not found acceptable the management still have the prerogative to proceed. The workforce now know why something is being done. This is a variant, then, if information-sharing and is on the same trajectory as participation-communications. There is no formal back-up to ensure that the reasons given are adequate, appropriate, right or even the actual reasons for making the decision. Without any real challenge to the implementation of the decision, the management have a carte blanche to offer any reasons they deem appropriate and satisfactory.

CHAPTER 4

NOVICES, INITIATES AND CONVERTS : THE TRAINING SESSION

Following the formal presentation of the scheme by both management and the consultants, and the consultants' discussions with the shop-floor, it was declared that there was sufficient interest from the shop-floor to warrant an extension of the project into the Packaging Department. Senior and Line management were in agreement. The drift towards a representational system crystallised into firm proposals. At a meeting between the consultants and the department section heads the number of representatives required, and from where they would be drawn, was decided. Time and facilities were made available for elections to take place.

With members duly elected, a so-called 'training session' was arranged at which the 'greenhorns' could be initiated into the mysteries of participation. This entailed a one day session set up by the personnel department but co-ordinated by the consultants. The sessions were led by Hamming and Kirknatch although Macheath was at hand as the company's internal 'participation man'. The others present (at the beginning) included those elected shop-floor representatives from the department; but not line management. It was decided at this stage to keep the levels separate. For ease of identification later it might be worthwhile introducing the individual members of the packaging department committee at this point.

Betty	-	chargehand rep.
Eileen	-	twilight chargehand rep.
Amy	-	blow-moulding rep.
Arthur	-	blow-moulding rep.
Iris	-	label room rep.
Susan	-	main floor rep.
Pauline	-	main floor rep.
Christie	-	Penicillin area rep.
Anne	-	twilight rep.
Peter	-	engineering services rep.

(at the training session and at the first couple of meetings Sid, a second rep. for the engineers, was also present).

In addition to those present at the training session were the following members of staff to complete the committee:

John	-	supervisor rep.
Cyril	-	section head
Chris	-	head of department
Mike	-	director pharmaceutical production

The above dramatis personae are all significant figures in what is to follow. It is largely amongst them that the important battles for the definition took place, although, clearly, each was involved in discourses beyond the configuration of this group.

The training session that took place is interesting from a number of points of view. In the first instance, in the interactions that took place between those gathered there, the meanings of participation are explored in some depth. For the representatives it was a learning experience in which they could begin to grasp what participation might mean for them. It was a time to test out the meanings being proffered by the company and by the consultants. It was a time to explore their own emerging definitions and match them against others. It was also an opportunity to express doubts, hopes and fears. It is in this session that the reps. are for the first time fully exposed to some of the actual and potential meanings of participation. The meanings to emerge from this series of interactions are formative of later machinations. Secondly, given the presence of Macheath, the session represented part of the continuing process of management's presentation of their definition of participation. The same, naturally, applies to the consultants.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the meeting was the presence in the afternoon of three shop-floor representatives from the Chemical Plant Working Committee. They had volunteered their services

for the session. The Chemical group had increasingly expressed an interest in being involved in the future development of the scheme. Indeed members of the Chemical Plant group were now serving on the Steering Committee. The intention was that they would be in a position to pass on to the new representatives the benefit of their own experience of involvement in the participation project. It was hoped that the Chemical group would perceive the situation as one of low threat and would feel free to talk about their perceptions of the scheme openly. From my point of view it provides an opportunity to re-enter the process from a point that I had assumed had passed. The members of this group had been involved in the scheme for nearly two years by this time, so their comments enable access to the process that had been proceeding since that time. It would prove interesting to see what meanings their talk now revealed. To what extent did their definitions reveal an allegiance to the definitions that had been proposed by management? To what degree had separate and/or conflicting definitions emerged amongst them as a group and individually? How would they present their definition of the situation to the novices?

Part One : Reassurance - Containment

The first half of the training session, however, was conducted only with those reps. from Packaging. Hamming explained to the reps. that the purpose of the first portion of the meeting was to 'work through some issues' and to obtain a list of points 'relating to the whole notion of this project .... your fears, anxieties and so on. Can we get these out on the table.' After a little encouragement, the reps. were very forthcoming. One can presume that what emerged reflected some of the issues exercising members of the workforce being

represented, as such they can be taken as part of the initial reactions of those members to what had been presented to them so far. They also are an index of some of the meanings beginning to emerge from shop-floor discourse.

This first phase of the session was concerned only with the establishment of a number of issues that could be discussed individually later. Consequently items were elicited without much preliminary debate; the points were simply brought up and then written on a blackboard by one of the consultants (although it should be noted that in the process some editing took place and some items were recast in the consultants own terminology). It is perhaps most useful here merely to reproduce the list as it appeared at the end of that phase.

1. Fear of 'black eyes' - the danger of recriminations and comebacks by (particularly) certain line managers.

2. How issues get raised - do they have to go through normal channels first?

3. Why are the company doing it - is it an attempt to keep the unions out?

4. Question of proof - is it necessary to provide proof of issues before they can be brought to the table?

5. Will the company take action on the issues raised - questions of the power of the group.

6. Why hasn't it been done before - something of the type has been asked for in the past.

7. Is the way things are being organised not merely reinforcing a 'them-and-us' situation?

8. Concerns about the way issues are to be brought up - particularly when they concern relations with line management. Do we confront? or request? or what?

9. Coping with awkward situations - particularly when things get heated.

Some of these points gloss a pervasive disquiet amongst the workforce in relation to their supervision. The points are to an extent lifted out of a dialogue that couched the problems in personalised and concrete terms. If one refers back to those sections (of this thesis) in which the workforce characterised superior-subordinate relations then it will be seen that fear, distrust and a generally low opinion of line management was a recurrent theme. The consultants,in smoothing out these personal attacks and acts of aggression, are attempting to instil a definition that had already emerged amongst themselves and management. Namely that participation should not be openly confrontational at a personal level. Issues of interpersonal relations should be de-personalised and abstracted. This reflects a managerial predilection for calm 'objective' meetings unclouded by messy arguments about individuals. It is the issue, in abstraction, that is important, not individuals. There is the beginnings of a movement here to position shop-floor representatives in modes of behaviour and talk that conform to familiar managerial ways of proceeding. It had already become apparent that part of the managerial ethos was a clutch of, what might be termed, points of etiquette. A gentleman's agreement not to 'rock the boat'; not to engage in personal attacks in public; to retain a semi-formal, polite approach; to treat issues objectively as issues. To an extent the representatives are being groomed to approach participation meetings in that frame of mind - to adopt those rules of etiquette - to become surrogate managers.

The language that had castigated line management earlier is echoed here. As is the occasionally negative characterisation of the company. The reps. are clearly suspicious of the company's intentions. 'Why are they doing it now?'; 'What's in it for them?'; 'They are only doing it to keep the unions out'. There are also echoes of that sense of frustration expressed by the workforce earlier in relation

to management's unresponsiveness to any issue or problem brought to their attention. It will be recalled that a frequent complaint of the shop-floor was that whenever issues were raised nothing was done; or that issues were blocked or filtered. The workforce as a result had become disillusioned and apathetic - they had 'given up'. There is some concern that the same inertia will be present in the context of participation. Especially so when the issues raised are uncomfortable to some managers. The workforce is aware of the company's ability to mask that disinclination to act behind a rhetoric of caring, openness and involvement; there is a suspicion that this scheme is another example. The notion of a disguising rhetoric is strengthened by the possibility that the company might have an ulterior motive for instigating such a scheme. That is, they have picked up on the idea that the reason for the introduction of the scheme is an attempt to keep out the unions.

Some of these points are best revealed with an extract from the interaction, particularly those points relating to the relationship with line management:

Hamming: "What about this issue of 'black eyes'? What exactly do you mean by that?"

Iris: (laughs a little nervously) "Well .. you know. It's a bit difficult to say .. but, you know, if people .. (laughs from some others) get at you after the meeting because of something you said. Like you say - recriminations."

Hamming: "From whom in particular are you thinking of?"

Anne: "I don't know if we should say ..(pauses) .. well, from that Cyril for one."
(others murmur in agreement)

Eileen: "And John ... he's worse."

Betty: "The point is with Cyril sitting there at the meeting we will be afraid of putting a point ... Cyril will think it's our point ... he'll have us marked down."

Anne: "If we want to raise points we're bound to say something against Cyril, aren't we?"

Christie: "Yeah, we'll want to have a go at Cyril, but we'll be afraid of what might follow."

Anne: "I bet he'll wish he'd never come!"

Iris: "Yes, but so might we."

Hamming: "Yes, O.K. What is being proposed here is a new way of doing things so there are bound to be difficulties. But don't forget the old structure and how things are .. you can't change that overnight. Don't let your expectations get too high. Cyril ain't going to change just like that.
There are two ways to change, one way is by revolution, the other is by evolution; I believe the latter is the best way. But I also believe that most people are, by nature, good; people don't normally inflict pain just for the hell of it. I have a fairly optimistic view about human beings. That being said, we do have to look very carefully at the way we handle people like Cyril.

It is difficult to enforce any rules in this area, ... in relation to recriminations I mean. The only way to approach this is to ensure that things are brought up <u>at the meeting</u>; the safety guard here is that the thing is public. So it may well be safer to raise things at meetings rather than elsewhere.

Things will get uncomfortable. We need to handle the first few meetings very carefully; especially the way issues are raised. We don't want to get too much heat going; we want to keep some discussion going. There will be some uncomfortable things said, the going may get tough. But if it gets bad for you, we are a second line of defence. We want to know if things get rough; we have some influence with people in this company who are keen to see this thing work. They are in a position to take the pressure off you. We will be available and we want and need to know."

Kirknatch: "Don't forget the supervisors and so on may be defensive and anxious too. They may feel they are the losers. They are losing their power to you. We need to put ourselves in their position and see that they may feel threatened."

Hamming: We should try not, at the meeting, to let out a full tirade of abuse and moans."

Iris: "We think we know Cyril knows what we think of him."

Macheath: "You think you know ... but he might not."

Hamming: "It may turn out to be the case that Cyril has taken your issues higher and not been able to get anywhere with them himself, but then not told you.
We want a position where answers must be given. Don't forget that even managers here don't have that much power - some things are out of their scope even. You may not, in the long run, like the decision or the information they give, but at least you get it."

Kirknatch: "We want answers with reasons - this is really the key point. Some of the reasons you won't like, but at least you'll know."

Hamming: "It can put you in a difficult position - you may get to know things that are confidential - that nobody else should know about."

Macheath: "The Chemical Plant Group knew the Managing Director was leaving even before some of the other directors knew."

Kirknatch: "A level of trust needs to be built up very slowly, it can all be spoilt very easily. It's like nurturing a young plant. You can help to avoid 'black eyes' by the way you raise issues at meetings. You have to learn some skills. In the Chemical Plant people came in and made statements and people got defensive. Questions are better. They are better if they are not personally oriented - don't crunch."

Anne: "But that should work both ways. They shouldn't be allowed to get at us either."

Peter: "There is a problem with holidays right now, it affects everybody, including management. But because of some production practices, people can't get what they want - we are forced to stick to this system because of some production targets. People aren't satisfied with the arrangement or the reasons. How can such an issue be taken any further?"

Macheath: "In the Chemical Plant they looked at this same problem and they managed to work something out. It goes to show that when you share information and have an open flow of ideas, there is a greater understanding of other people's position. It is easier to get things done in that kind of atmosphere. People have their own views and when they get the opportunity to express things they can influence other people. The important thing is to provide the right opportunity and atmosphere for people to put their views."

Hamming: "There will be issues that can't be taken any further - but we don't want that to be seen as a 'them-and-us' situation - it should be seen as a shared fact of life.
We don't want a 'them-and-us' attitude at all, it's not something we want to foster. There are too many levels of supervision in this company - we want to break down some of the barriers. We want to see a situation where both points of view can be put."

Part of the move here is to neutralise the acidity of the members attack on their superiors. The consultants and Macheath are keen to dispel a definition of participation that includes such personalised vitriolic attacks. They want to defuse the situation, to take the 'heat' out of it. They suggest that they, the workers, may in any case have got it wrong. Once they have heard the full story from the other side (something that participation will provide for them) they may come to realise that they simply did not understand properly. It is further made clear that such a confrontational style is ineffective in any case. Once they have mastered certain 'skills' they will come to realise that there are more effective ways of tackling such issues. A further part of the argument poses the bosses as only normal human beings, and normal human beings are not naturally vicious and malicious. Quite apart from whether or not such a statement is true, it glosses an inequitable power arrangement and a potentially repressive ideology in which the assertion of one will over another is seen as natural and interpersonal violence is institutionalised. People do not have to be perceived as self-motivated agents of the devil, wilfully commiting acts of mayhem, for them to be seen to be engaging in acts of violence.

The workforce are having their guns spiked. What they see as their justifiable ire at a demeaning and crushing management is being toned down. One might suggest that a justifiable response to a given

situation is being converted into something different and altogether tamer. The implications are even more striking if one recalls the indication that the encouragement is to recast their anger into forms that more closely match the traditional and habitual styles of management. Once in that style management further have the necessary and much practiced skills of containing the aggression and manipulating the issue. (There is no need here to suggest or impute manipulative or malicious motives to either the management or the consultants. Their presentation has a reasonableness and sense that can be justified from within their respective organisational and academic discourses. What I suggest is that the interpretation offered here is a reasonable and plausible consequence of their talk derived from and operating towards particular definitions.)

This pacification programme is also embodied in the language that surrounds the bringing-up and treatment of issues. The workforce are to be given 'reasons' and 'answers'. They are to put 'questions'; not statements or assertions. All of which positions them in a passive mode. They present things to management who then go away, find the answer or the explanation and come back and let the people know. Their active role consists of the presentation of the issues. They must put their side of the case and allow management to put theirs. Then see the understanding flow. Any action to be taken is either left vague or placed firmly in the hands of management. There is no suggestion of the workforce arriving at their own decision and taking action upon it. There is no suggestion of the workforce being asked their advice. There is no suggestion even of the reps. sharing in the making of decisions and assuming some responsibility for any agreed action.

Another important theme in the definitional process begins to emerge here. It concerns the position of the line management; in

particular the area supervisors and the section heads (in the case of packaging this includes Cyril, John and Martin - the latter being the one not encountered yet, who is on equal standing with John as the other area supervisor). Not only are they presented as the villians of the piece by the workforce, but they are also positioned at the front line of any potential power struggle by management and the consultants. The shop-floor members hold this level of the hierarchy responsible for most of their problems. This is hardly surprising since it is this group that oversees the day-to-day operations of the department and it is with Cyril and his colleagues that the workforce have the most contact. Furthermore, the section head and his supervisors are responsible for implementing the production schedules etc. passed down to them. They are also responsible in the first instance for discipline of the shop-floor. But, of course, many of the decisions they put into practice emanate from elsewhere - many of the things that affect the daily lives of the workforce are decided upon higher up the ladder. Although at some points the consultants indicate that not all power resides with these line managers, the conversation here and elsewhere continues to resound to the clamour of a battle fought around their position. They are located as the site of actual and potential conflict between management and the shop-floor. They are made the centre of any power issues. If anyone has to change, it is they. 'There are too many levels of supervision in this company' seems to be made to apply directly to this group; and when the 'barriers' are pulled down perhaps these people will fall with them. It is the supervisors who are losing their power; it is they who will feel threatened.

They are being made into scapegoats. By locating the power debate, such as it is, around that position in the hierarchy, attention is deflected away from higher levels. With the onset of participation

it is the supervisory levels who lose their power and must modify their behaviour, or face extinction. More senior management seems to escape the effects of these changes. Somehow the debate about the distribution of power within the company does not apply to them. This attitude became quite pervasive; senior management became quite evangelical when it was a matter of purging the supervisors of their reprehensible behaviours. They were most keen to point out the faults in those levels, to discuss the need for change, to talk about the abuse of power and how to diminish it. They would play the role of uncle, advising the supervisors to reflect on and recognise that times have changed and that they must be prepared to accept these changes in their positions of privilege. But, those managers were loath to apply the same arguments to themselves. The buck stopped with the section heads. They did not want to look at the possibility that the power debate might actually lie closer to home. When it was suggested that they too might need to change and accept changes in their positions of privilege, they baulked at the idea. This pattern was repeated up the hierarchy; each level happy to witness and vouchsafe the asset-stripping and transformation of their lowly colleagues, but decidedly surprised and unhappy when the issue approached them. The higher up the hierarchy, the less it was felt that they were at the heart of the debate, and less the willingness to face those possibilities and the changes it might entail.

Some of the pronouncements by the consultants are quite interesting in this passage and at other points in this encounter. They are clearly making a significant contribution to the definitional process. For instance, they are again linking participation to change. Change has been left rather vaguely most of the time and remains so here, although some fresh associations and differentiations appear that add to its meaning. It is tied explicitly here to some

change in supervision. There are intimations that there should be a slow move to a change in the behaviour of the line management. Or there will be a change in the relationship of shop-floor to line management. There is even a darkling threat that certain levels of supervision might require major surgery.

Then again change, of the vague variety, will not be rapid. The members should be prepared for any changes to take place over some length of time. This is related to the piece of rhetoric linking the kind of changes associated with participation, to evolution rather than revolution. This commonsense theory of change is perhaps laid down without too little regard for its political overtones, but who can doubt that they are there and were not lost on everybody. This conception of change ties in with earlier associations in which an attempt is made to make participation appear as if it is a carefully, almost scientifically, controlled and monitored exercise harnessed by reason and logic. Participation is in the control of 'experts' who will carefully guide it slowly but surely through the troubles of Change. This is a further part of the language that tames the 'wildness' of participation and settles it in the familiarity of tried and tested structures and procedures. Participation is not the violent struggle of revolution. It will not be allowed to manifest in unpredictable and unruly ways. The Shock of the New is to be avoided and replaced by a steady familiarisation and a gradual motion that allows Change to slip by with stealth. Evolution in current scientific discourse is, of course, a completely natural process. Whereas revolution (in most bourgeois discourse at least) is not a natural process. Participation is being subtly aligned with Nature, retrieved from the dark forces of a malevolent and rank culture. The slow germinating seed, nurtured to maturity. Not the contrived clashing of opposed factions. Nor the immediacy of an

electrical switch.

Despite this conservatism, the faithful are being led to expect change; to expect something 'new'. Things will be different, in some way. But presumably not different in any revolutionary way. Just slightly different by imperceptible stages.

The raising and satisfying of expectations has already been alluded to in preceding passages, but again here it starts to get woven into the fabric. Expectations are threaded to change such that the members are urged not to expect too much change too soon. This lowering of expectations may also be taken as a part of the pacification programme. The implication being that if expectations are kept low then demands will be non-extravagant and 'reasonable'. The company had already drawn attention in some of its internal documents to the possibility of raising expectations to a level at which they are doomed to be unfulfilled. The company seems already to be aware that there would be limits to what could be released to the shop-floor. In a sense there is a certain prejudging of the issue - an a priori boundary-constructing process. The urging to control expectations signposts an anticipated confrontation at some boundary point in the future.

Much of the discussions between the shop-floor and the consultants and between the shop-floor and myself were characterised by their giving vent to a barrage of complaints and gripes about working conditions and their supervisors. The attitude was negative, very little was put forward as a means of improving the situation. It seemed obvious that they had been provided with an opportunity to give free expression to a set of feelings that would normally only surface at work amongst themselves. The consultants were quick to try to dissipate this wholly negative attitude and attempt to get the workforce to approach the issues in a more constructive

vein. The representatives (and elsewhere the others) are urged not to consider participation as a 'forum for moaning and groaning'. Part of this is the same movement to avoid personalised attacks but it is also an attempt to move the shop-floor to a position where they treat issues abstractly rather than concretely. It is also part of the movement instigated by management talk that re-affirms 'existing channels' for the expedition of issues, moans and groans of an individual localised nature should be capable of being dealt with under normal shop-floor practices. The participation meetings should not get cluttered with an avalanche of minor issues.

The last contribution from Hamming presented above provides some interesting illustrations. The first sentence is suggesting that when an issue is brought up and progressed there will be times when, even if it gets as far as the managing director, it may still prove impossible to take any action. It is being pointed out that Pencham is part of a larger organisation and that certain decisions and policies are decided well away from the plant and are outside the control of even senior managers at Pencham. The speech situates even the top local managers in a hierarchy where there is someone even above them. Their power too is decidedly finite. An impression of 'we are all in the same boat' is being attempted. We are all locked in a hierarchical structure in which there is always someone else who has the power to decide things that affect us. So, when a department manager fails to progress an issue, it is not because he is opposing the workforce, but that he too may have encountered that point at which his power has reached its limits. It is an argument that glosses the fact that the hierarchy is still there and that the workforce are on the bottom. Even if the managing director does not possess the powers of a deity in all situations, he still retains enough power to influence unilaterally the lives of those in

a lower position than he is. As a piece of rhetoric it attempts to paper-over that essential difference and assert that which the levels have in common. The attempt is to create a common bond between those who are universally put upon. The recognition of this mutual embeddedness in a power hierarchy is urged upon the group as a 'shared fact of life'. There is a sense of fatalism about that remark. All levels in the company share a common lowly position to some other force away from Pencham. That this is so must be readily acknowledged and accepted as an inevitable feature of life. Such a stance is perhaps best described as non-radical.

To play down the confrontational aspects of the situation is to differentiate participation from a 'them-and-us' situation. Rather participation is sided with a sharing, a mutual understanding, a frank exchange of views. It is interesting to note that it is the shop-floor rep. Peter who actually raises the 'them-and-us' question by probing into the absence of the line managers from that very meeting. It is further evidence of the traditionalism and compliant attitude of the workforce that they should be aware of the notion of 'them-and-us' and yet perceive it as a thoroughly undesirable state of affairs. They, too, seem keen that participation should be differentiated from such an attitude.

Some 'old' meanings are still circulating at this meeting. Particularly in the talk of Macheath. That open weave of terms around participation consisting of 'understanding', 'discussions', 'information sharing' and the 'exchange of points of view' is as much in evidence here as elsewhere. Macheath does not deviate significantly from a standard company definition.

What Macheath does do is slip in a tempting morsel as part of the continued marketing of participation. It prefigures a theme that is to re-emerge again over the course of the project. The

reps. are told that they may become privy to confidential information. Macheath gives the example from the Chemical Plant Group. The appeal of being 'in the know', of being part-owners of a secret is almost universally irresistable. Later the representatives are often referred to as 'privileged'; as are those groups that are participating compared to those that are not. Such ploys elevate the scheme and give it a positive value connotation. It makes those taking part special. It also separates them from their shop-floor colleagues. They are being prepared to accept that their position as rep. is one of responsibility in the way that a managers job is responsible. There is the faintest trace here of a movement that separates the representatives from the rest of the workforce and begins to partially incorporate them into the environs of management.

To make just a tangental note here. It is interesting to see the consultants presenting themselves as guardians. They place themselves in the position of an available resource to be used by the reps. At various points they are eager to distance themselves from management, to be seen as independent agents, a kind of non-aligned third force, situated in such a way that they can act as arbiters and/or protectors. At other times they present themselves more directly as guardians of shop-floor interests and goals.

Part Two : Reassurance - Solidarity

The second part of the 'training session' commenced after the original group was joined, following a coffee break, by three shop-floor representatives from the Chemical Plant Group. These shall be referred to as Sam, Michael and Harold. The temptation here is

to reproduce the whole dialogue. But some editing is required simply from the point of view of space.

(It should be noted in passing that the consultants assured me that the three Chemical groups had not been primed before the meeting. Although the presence of the consultants at the meeting doubtless had some effect, what the three have to say must be taken as an unsolicited and honest appraisal.)

After a brief introduction by Hamming the discussion got under way:

> Betty: "Tell us, do you think it's been worthwhile?"
>
> Harold: "Yes, definitely. You can get things done now .. if you aren't too aggressive. Don't get too personal. They soon get to learn who you are talking about even if you don't actually say who. It's a bit like being in court - you get to say your bit, you're allowed to say your piece. But if you start to say something and then back out and don't finish, then (pauses and nods sideways at Hamming) 'Mastermind' here reads your mind ... kicks you under the table and makes sure you bring it out." (Laughs)
>
> Sam: "Yeah. You can say things and there's no come-back either."
>
> Harold: "The first two or three meetings though were terrible. Everything got very heated. But it got better - now we can raise any type of issue with no problems. You can accuse people and they accept the criticism."

A more auspicious and apropos start could not have been scripted: at least from the point of view of the consultants. The scheme was being given (and continued to be) a quite significant stamp of affirmation by this trio.

The dialogue helps to cement here those preceding pronouncements concerning the need to avoid an openly confrontational attitude. The reps. are able to support that definition by indicating that practically they were able to get more done by a more softly softly approach. They further contribute directly to that discourse that couches participation in terms of 'putting your point', 'saying your

piece', etc. The use of the courtroom analogy, with it's intimations of adversarial arrangement is interesting, retaining there some sense of an arena of conflict and challenge. Sam's contribution immediately answers the Packaging group's anxiety about 'black eyes', and confirms the consultants reassurances.

But meanwhile, back at the meeting:

Hamming: "Can you say something about the problems of reporting-back to your members. The problems of apathy and so on."

Harold: "It's very difficult. The point is you've got to represent; you can't just put your own case (although it's very tempting some times). Then at the other end, you've got to go back and present it so it's not twisted. The reps. really need to get their stories straight before they go back."

Kirknatch: "Yes but what about the apathy of your members, how do you get through that?"

Harold: "Well, some of them you just can't get through to. But generally you've just got to keep going round chatting to people. I try and get them to talk about not simply grievance procedures but real issues - group issues."

Peter: "What about management, do they bring up gripes?"

Harold: "Not very often, they usually wait for ours."

Peter: "So it's all one way."

Harold: "It is originally, but later on you come to work things out together."

Hamming: "If you're asking, Peter, if management bring things to the table then, from our experience so far, they don't all that often. That is not to say that there aren't issues that they could bring up."

Macheath: "Nowadays it's a bit different. There are a lot of issues coming up that are really joint issues - not really a vested interest on either side. Some issues are coming up that are management initiated."

Michael: "Yes, management can bring up issues."

Peter: "You keep saying things like 'could', 'can', 'probably', as if it isn't actually happening yet."

Michael: "Well yes, it is starting to happen. For instance they had some major plans for alterations to the working area. They bring the plans along to us and we can look at it too; we can make our own suggestions. We haven't had too much two-way traffic but it's coming in."

Kirknatch: "The two-way thing is slower from management because probably they are suspicious. It's a new thing for them too, don't forget. Cyril, for instance, probably has some issues but he may not want to air them immediately. Just as you are worried about black eyes, think that if Cyril brings up issues they may offend someone above him."

Michael: "The supervisors tend to feel that their position is being undermined. But I think they come to realise that that isn't necessarily the case. They realise that what you want is improved conditions."

Christie: "In our area the whole thing is just not thought out. They tell us they are going to do something, we tell them it isn't going to work, but they go ahead and just tell us to try it. So you do, and when it goes wrong they make us go on with it. They won't admit they've made a mistake. They keep saying how much it cost - 'it must work', they say, 'look how much it cost'."

Michael: "In our area now we want to know beforehand about projects, about what's going to happen. We get, say, the blueprints and we put our comments on it."

Anne: "But they won't go back to the old way - even if they can see they were wrong."

Hamming: "We are trying to get a situation where everyone can have a say."

Christie: "But we do tell them."

Macheath: "Yes, but you didn't have the correct forum then."

Hamming: "With this the whole issue becomes public, other people know that the issue has been raised and your comments are recorded."

Harold: "Before it was just you and him, private, now you have things out in the open."

Macheath: "With these meetings things are more open, the whole thing is public. You and they must come to see things in terms of how much is going to be known and how widely known."

Kirknatch: "Still management may go ahead, despite what you've said; but then things will be in the minutes. They can then face up to their mistakes and your knowledge better."

Michael: "You may all decide something - do it participatively - and it still may not work. But then you have a sort of collective blame. You will all have to work it out together again."

Hamming: "I think there are two important differences. Firstly, it is more open, more public. Secondly, we are here - we can act as umpires. We don't belong to either side."

Harold: "At meetings at least you know that things go as far as they can - to P. Sherry. The line managers can't just say 'no'. There have been changes in the Chemical Plant that would not have come up if it had not been for participation. It's important though to bring up the right kind of issue."

Sam: "I want people to support this. I was glad to be involved in it." (other two nod in agreement).

Michael: "Getting communications right is very important."

Harold: "Make sure you get your facts right before you start."

Michael: "Make sure you know the procedures inside out."

Macheath: "Let's not knock these supervisors too much. They probably think they are doing things O.K. - from reasonable motives."

Sid: "I reckon there's a problem. I reckon there are some people that just ain't going to change. They just won't accept things."

Hamming: "Yes, we accept that. But there are less people like that than you think. Cyril, I think, will change."

Harold: "People do change. You should see old Jack (Chemical Plant section head). He used to be a bit of a right old bastard. But now he's much milder - he asks your opinion instead of just telling you. That's down to participation."

Iris: "Yes, but can you really change people's personalities?"

Hamming: "Well maybe not but you can change relationships."

The session continued in a similar vein with the Chemical Plant reps. maintaining their positive stance. Needless to say, by the end of the session, the consultants were delighted; as was Macheath. Indeed the whole meeting was pervaded by a sense of excitement, and there was a

marked sense of being part of something - to a degree - momentous. The Chemical Plant people clearly revelled in their role as 'trainers'. It was an occasion for mutual back slapping, and there was an air of solidarity.

What is perhaps most immediately apparent is the familiarity of the language in which participation was discussed. Many of the terms and expressions employed by the 'trainers' repeat those already present in the discourse of management and the consultants. Without the assurances given by the consultants, one might even have been led to suspect that they had been issued with scripts before the meeting.

The reps. had quite obviously fully taken on board the definition of participation that associates it with a system of representational democracy. It is also clear that they have learnt to talk about that role with a degree of seriousness and a sense of responsibility. They also echo that talk that builds relationships between participation and communications, making 'suggestions', and change.

The lesson according to the consultants whereby participation is not to be viewed as a forum for mere 'moans and groans' had also been well attended by these reps. They were eager to emphasise the need to propagate the right type of issue and to do so in particular ways.

The talk about shop-floor apathy and representatives' attempts to counteract it to some degree prefigures a movement already alluded to and which will re-emerge later. The enthusiasm encountered in this exchange is the enthusiasm of the representatives and does not necessarily map the response of the rest of the shop-floor. It became an increasingly recognisable trend that the reps. displayed an increasing commitment and identification with the project. They took

a certain pride in their role and a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment at being involved with something that took them beyond the routines of their daily work. This enthusiasm was not always shared by those they represented. There was often something of a struggle to generate a constructive responsiveness from their colleagues. To some extent the reps. accepted the rhetoric that presented the scheme as important and serious; the management rhetoric that they were a part of a forerunning progressive experiment in industrial relations. The reps., too, were positioned as being privileged in comparison to their colleagues. To a degree, then, the reps. were caught in a movement of inclusion in which they enter into an area that is occupied by management but from which other shop-floor people are excluded. A certain division between the reps. and the rest of the shop-floor people begins to open up, together with a simultaneous movement that draws the reps. towards the space occupied by management. This trend is emphasised by the reps. increasingly coming to share a common language, relating to participation and the discussion of issues, with management, to which the shop-floor are not a party. The reps. are in a position to evaluate and talk about the scheme in a language that has a sophistication developed in constant interactions with the consultants and management and which is shared between them. The rest of the shop-floor perhaps continue to talk about the scheme and evaluate it in terms of their traditional and familiar discourse. As we have seen already that discourse is often characterised by a language that relates to concrete issues, of 'moans and groans', that casts management in a negative light and has themselves as passive recipients unable or unwilling to do anything to alter their situation.

The positive, constructive approach of the shop-floor reps. is contrasted with the inertia and passivity of the management delegation.

Experience to date reveals that the push is almost entirely from the workforce. They bring issues to the participation meetings to which members of the management side react; giving 'answers', 'reasons', or going in search of a decision and some action. The management reps. do not, as yet define participation as a forum in which they too can raise issues in a proactive way. The direction is invariably; shop-floor - management, never the reverse and not even variations on, line management - senior management. The traditional divisions remain with the whole of the management group exhibiting company solidarity. Participation is defined almost exclusively as a means of increasing the involvement of the shop-floor,or whatever, never in terms of the extended involvement of line managers in the decisions made habitually at levels above them. Located here is that manoeuvre that sites line management at the front line and makes the power issue reside in the relationship between them and the shop-floor. It is interesting to note that later, when line management become more active, some of the latent power issues come more readily to the fore.

The shop-floor reps. recognise this passivity of management and clearly see it as undesirable. They want to define participation in more collectivist terms. They want to dispatch any them-and-us connotations and continually remphasise that it should be a 'two-way thing'. They, too, are using a language that denies participation as a confrontational activity, where 'two sides' meet and management simply respond to demands and grievances made by the shop-floor. They want to foster an image of mutual involvement and a sharing of an issues-generation, progression and resolution. They concur here with much of the line proposed by Macheath and the consultants.

Indeed, at times in the discussion the Chemical Plant reps., Macheath and the consultants combine forces and present a unified line to a still sceptical Packaging group. There is agreement, for

instance, that line management are a problem. Michael points out that they feel threatened, that it is they that, incorrectly, perceive participation as an assault on their position of power. Michael suggests further that conception is not shared by his group who in fact only define participation as a means to 'improving conditions'. The potential for a confrontation of the power issue is recognised, but turned away from.

The reps. from the Packaging area continue to express doubts and to exhibit a degree of scepticism even in the face of this unified exhortation. They question management's real commitment and intentions. They, too, fear that management will not engage with them positively and that it might become a mere grievance coping mechanism rather than a format for collective action. They suspect that their supervisors are too entrenched in established patterns and will prove resistant to change.

Macheath made periodic interpolations that at times seemed oddly out of step with the general tone of the discussion. He is a very ebullient personality given to flights of verbosity. Frequently he seemed unable to control his desire to make a contribution and his conversation often ran off from the temper of the dialogue to an overblown expression of his own opinions. Following such interjections, talk often picked up from where it had left off and bypassed what he had said. The extent of his contributions on the definitional process in this instance is therefore hard to evaluate. However, quite apart from his personalised viewpoint, he was perceived to some extent as the 'company man' amongst those present. It would be unwise, then, to pass on without some consideration of the meanings he was allowing to develop.

At one point he refers to the 'learning' that had occurred during the Chemical Plant phase and how that experience would be

valuable in the current developments. In particular he refers to how they had learnt to 'get on with other people we work with'. Intimations that participation involves an improvement in worker-management relations. This adds to a bundle of relationships that has participation as a coming-together, a co-operative mechanism. "There are a lot of issues coming up that are really joint issues - not really a vested interest on either side." (And again later):

> "We are working toward a better network ... moving toward a freer system where we have better relations and better communications. We should move towards a reduction in the old fashioned 'them-and-us' mentality."

Conflict and confrontation are castigated as highly negative attributes of an outmoded conception of workplace relations. The attempt is to cast organisations into the mould of places of commonality in which all members are in the same boat and have common interests and concerns that can be handled mutually. It approaches that unitary view that 'healthy' organisations are recognisable by the degree to which its members, from all levels, share in commonly held goals and aspirations. It even moves towards that view that a healthy organisation is characterised by a matching of organisational goals and their means to the interests of the workforce. It distinctly departs from any overtly pluralist conception of organisations.

About halfway through the session, Macheath sets off on an extended monologue precipitated by a question from Sid concerning the follow-up to the extension of the scheme to Packaging:

> Macheath: "Where are we going? Well the Chemical Plant was a pilot study; what can you do when you get to the end of it? You can either stop or let it keep on growing. But I believe there is no going back, there is no stopping it once you have embarked on that course. The thing is, people don't like change very much. If things are going along reasonably well, which at Tridy they were, relatively speaking -

especially if you take normal company barometers like labour turn-over, absenteeism and so on - then people don't really want to change things too much. You can expect there to be the normal number of moans."

(There is a small interchange between Sid and Macheath before Macheath resumes his thesis)

If you look carefully at the way society is going .. how is the home run these days etc., how are schools run, generally now in society there is less 'thou shalt' and more 'let's talk about it'. In industry and in this company we don't want to get isolated, to be left behind in these changes.
So that is why the pilot scheme was set up. But what have we learnt from that? I think we have learnt some good things, and identified some problems; but on balance good things. So do we expand or stop things at the Chemical Plant. Again on balance we decide that we want to go on, so we need to expand ... but we must do this carefully. We take the evolutionary way.
So where do we go? There were a number of things about Packaging that seemed to suggest that would be a good way. It's very different from the Chemical Plant. We could learn new things, see how it worked in that type of department. Then we might consider moving on elsewhere - say, the Dry Products bit next.
Part of the reason for expansion is that although initially issues raised in the Chemical Plant seemed peculiar to them, soon issues were cropping up that had a much wider significance. This creates a need to develop vertically as well as horizontally, so that then we can have representatives from these groups going up and representing at a higher level. We can move to a divisional level meeting where things discussed are not merely Packaging, but concern the whole production area. Then we can begin to think about a site-wide scheme.
But this doesn't mean that each group will be organised on the same basis - although we hope all will be based on a general participative approach. What we want is more involvement - about things that affect us at work. We want to try to improve the quality of working life - try and make it tolerable and satisfying. We all have something to contribute. We are all experts in a way. We want to tap this experience."

There are clearly certain repetitions here from earlier texts. But as with the intertextual always, it is never a matter of perfect

repetition as if quotes are being made. The meanings on separate occasions and in separate contexts cannot match exactly. However, note again the use of terms like 'pilot study', 'involvement', etc. More important than the actual repetition of words is the re-appearance of certain familiar themes.

Firstly, there is the theme of 'inevitability'. It is suggested that once the company has embarked on a participative exercise there is little chance of reversing the process. Although Macheath does not provide reasons in this context we know from past interactions that he is referring to certain 'internal and external pressures'. There is the question of raising expectations and then not going on to fulfil them. Then there are the pressures from possible legislation. Furthermore there is the 'inevitable march of history thesis', specifically mentioned here. Wider society is characterised in its interpersonal and institutional relations by, what is perceived as, an increasing degree of involvement and participation and by a decline in authoritarianism. This more or less 'natural' process is continuing all the while in society generally and it is a foolish company that falls out of step with such a movement. Again participation is offered as part of a broader 'natural' process; by being a part of it, those involved are displaying the wisdom of the age, are at the forefront of the tide of history.

Such a presentation ties in well with another common theme. The text refers to the 'evolutionary way' as the way in which the scheme should develop. This is partly Macheath talking to the consultants, whose espoused theoretical inclination, you will recall, was just this view of change. Evolution connects with this sense of an unstoppable process going on all around. There is even the suggestion that the vitality, the survival of the company is associated with being in tune with this evolutionary process. All of this is

syntagmatically reinforced by use of the metaphor of 'growing' in relation to the development of the scheme. A careful nurturing of a planted seed to encourage growth into a 'healthy' and evolutionary sound organism.

These organic metaphors that appear here and elsewhere are undermined by the presence of other, differing metaphors in the same space. On this occasion, for instance, Macheath refers to 'a need to develop vertically as well as horizontally'. This indexes a structural, a spatial metaphor that, as we have seen, is also used frequently to describe the scheme. There is a certain tension between these two metaphors. However, the organic metaphor is usually employed to illustrate the development of the scheme and the spatial metaphor is used to refer to that which is derived from that developmental process, the constituent pieces of the scheme. The rhetoric here is quite accomplished; the development of the scheme is associated with a 'natural', healthy and inevitable process; a part of history, a part of life; the embodiment of the scheme is articulated to a formal and familiar structural metaphor that describes the existing patterns of the organisation. The two metaphors net both process and structure; both nature and culture; the life sciences and the physical sciences. Both succeed in relating participation to that which is familiar and comfortable. It relates it to natural and existing order and expels any potential effervescence and disruptiveness.

Participation is allied to change once again, but the change is not seen as a response, necessarily, to a 'felt need' within the organisation. People are said to be resistant to change, particularly when there is nothing intolerable about the status quo. Macheath presents the company as proceeding 'reasonably well', drawing attention to those criteria that are the stock-in-trade of personnel departments, like labour turn-over. Indeed, as pointed out earlier,

the company's industrial relations record on these indices, and by its general repute, was fairly good (taking into account that the company had no union organisation). There are grievances, but a certain amount are to be accepted as quite normal and expected. Almost all compulsion to change is said to derive from external sources, by shifts in the wider society. This implies that the members of the organisation may not readily perceive the need for change if they consider only those factors associated with matters internal to the company. But Macheath offers the wisdom of a broader perspective that directs an awareness to those external pressures. What is achieved here is a protection of the company's reputation and a deflection of a train of thought that might connect participation with change engendered by a failure of, or dissatisfaction with, existing organisational arrangements. Participation, and therefore change, is not being introduced because of some need indigenous to the organisation. Tridy, even in its past states, remains unstained. Change is being introduced not because the company is at fault, or is in some way bad, but rather in a positive manner to enable its members to enjoy the benefits of being in step with the world. It is not a rearguard action by a defensive company, but a proactive, positive and paternalistic action for the good health of the company and therefore its members.

However, Macheath does recognise implicitly some internal pressure, if not for the original introduction of participation, then at least for its extension. There had been increasing pressure from the Chemical Plant group to tackle issues that had implications beyond their own department. Management had felt unable to respond to those demands and the resulting frustration was jeopardising the smooth running of the scheme. But other meanings circulate around

this problem of issues being site-wide, and the future development of the scheme. In the case of the Chemical Group and later with the Packaging Group, the question of 'site-wide' was often said by the shop-floor to have been used by management to stonewall the progression of certain issues. By labelling an issue 'site-wide' an attempt was made to rule it out of court. Such issues were more directly challenging to the existing power arrangements within the company. Local issues could be coped with but in raising issues that entailed more 'distant participation' the shop-floor were more likely to challenge the prerogatives of management at a more significant level. We will need to return to this issue.

The last paragraph of the text is quite revealing. Here participation is being firmly rooted in a strong intertext that activates a discourse around the themes of the humanisation-of-work movement. The 'quality of working life' had become a commonplace slogan in certain discourses on participation and related topics at a time prior to the company's introduction of the scheme. Macheath has demonstrated a familiarity with this discourse previously. The paragraph here mimics those other academic, political and bureaucratic texts. Such mimesis is somewhat wasted since most of those present were not in the least familiar with what it indexes. Macheath is really only speaking to the consultants here. Perhaps this is why so much of his contribution seemed so disphasic. However, some of the terms would have sufficient non-specialist meanings to enable the members to form meaningful relations. Again the overall tone focuses participation on localised issues; on workplace relations and practices. There is the explicit link between participation and satisfaction appearing for the first time; a common pre-occupation with much preceding academic literature. There is, finally the paternalistic reference to 'we all have something to offer', and the sense that participation

can be used to 'tap' resources and thereby improve the operating efficiency of the company; another theme beloved of the academic literature.

Part Three : Reassurance - Direction

The remainder of the session concentrated on the elicitation of some issues that could be raised at the participation meetings together with some discussion on procedures. There was certainly no reticence in the raising of issues; they came thick and fast. There was some embarassment when a couple of problems arose that had a direct bearing on Macheath's personnel function. Many of the issues were straightforward 'hygiene issues' relating to working conditions etc. (e.g. question concerning the provision of food machines on site; changing room facilities; heating inadequate; questions about storage arrangements; lighting; fire-drill, etc.). Others were of a more general nature concerned with broader company procedures and work relationships (question of procedures and policies of sick pay; concerns about the company's job grading scheme; manning and shift arrangements; differential interpretation of company policy by individual supervisors; questions of training; concern that even within the one department there was no feeling of belonging to the same company, of being isolated in different sections; supervisory motives for the constant moving of workers from one band of production to another, etc.). Then there were issues relating to the format and procedures of participation itself (problems of contact with constituents; are there time limits on discussions?, etc.). Many of the issues had already surfaced during the consultants and my own preliminary discussions with all members of the shop-floor.

There was some time pressure to draw the meeting to a close, so

Hamming assumed a chairman's role:

> Hamming: "O.K. Let's look at these ... We don't want something too difficult and threatening to start off with. Grading, for instance, although it is obviously important may be a little difficult to handle in the first instance. (Studies the list that has been collated on the blackboard).
> Let's mark out some important ones that we want to give notice of to bring up at future meetings."

A process begins, largely initiated and conducted by Hamming in which the issues are sifted and ordered. Certain issues like 'grading' that are labelled 'sensitive' are put in abeyance until some future date. Gradually lists emerge of issues to be tackled over the next three meetings. Although there was some discussion and no trenchant disagreement, the whole process was quite clearly led by Hamming and Kirknatch; there was a sense of railroading through of the kind of issues and their sequencing that they wished to see. It might be helpful, particularly for future discussions, to itemise these lists.

Issues for first meeting:

1. Communicating to constituents and other process issues.
2. The grievance procedure - what is it and how is it used.
3. The role of the Personnel Dept.
4. Provision of food machines and other canteen arrangements.
5. Provision of banking facilities on site.
6. Safety of entrance gates.
7. Christmas wages.
8. Lighting in the label room.

Issues to be given notice of requiring attention at the next meeting:

1. Issues around unpaid leave and sick pay.
2. The issue of packaging being experienced as a series of isolated units, and the feelings of isolation that gives rise to.

3. Plus other issues to be taken from those listed but not so far scheduled, and those carried over from above.

Issues to be given notice of requiring attention at the third meeting:

1. The issue of responsibility for inspection.
2. Does the company want quality or quantity.
3. The issue of shift manning - engineers.
4. The issue of the priority of maintenance or production.
5. Plus issues carried over or others from the non-scheduled list still not dealt with.

There was also quite an extensive list of other issues that were put to one side to be fitted in later. The details of that list need not concern us here.

There was some attempt in the final stages of the meeting, then, to control some of the subsequent steps of the process. Hamming directed the proceedings such that a definition was promulgated that envisaged participation as a potentially threatening and heated process, but that this was to be avoided. Confrontation and personal attacks were to be avoided. But there is also some indication that those issues that would more directly confront the prerogatives of management's power to decide on the more fundamental issues, were being avoided. The reason being that already stated, that participation should not be marred (at this stage at least) by heated argument and threatening behaviour. However, it should be pointed out that the wording of some of the issues incorporated on the agenda, glosses some more crucial and deep-seated antaganisms. For instance, as we shall see later, the question of unpaid leave, in reality had a lot to do with line management's style and their relationship to the shop-floor. The issue of 'does the company want quality or quantity' hides a whole can of worms, and has a lot to do with production

pressures being put on the workforce, that tended to result in, what was perceived as, unfair practices by the supervisors.

The session is rounded off with some discussion about the format and procedures of the meetings to follow. It largely adopted the style of a question and answer period with the consultants and Macheath responding to inquiries from the reps. Here is a section that gives some flavour of it and focuses specifically on further contributions to the definitional process by the consultants and Macheath:

Hamming: "What's our role? Well, we will come in and try and get things going - especially if we sense that things are being held back. If we think it's O.K. we will suggest you carry on. Or if it's sensitive, we might try and head it off. We want you, in a way, to take note of what we say - we've had experience.
We want a proper resolution of issues, that's our major concern. We don't want things to get held up. But all these issues need to be discussed more fully at the meetings.
You can contact us anytime privately. Or you can go to (Macheath) - he's our internal man - we work as a team with him."

Macheath: "I play a complementary role to Hamming . My interest is to get a new system going. I've been talking about it for over six years - now it's really got going thanks to Hamming and Kirknatch . I get good advice from them. I'm fully committed to this."

Iris: "How did management react when all this was first brought up?"

Macheath: "Well, from the project they began to realise there was an alternative way of doing things. So after the project at the Chemical Plant they said 'Let's go on with it'. Your effort is crucial - you've really got to get on with it. A lot ... the majority of management are behind it now - P. Sherry had reservations at the start but he's committed to it now. T. Losthole got things going originally, it was him that got agreement from higher up."

Hamming: "Paul Sherry is enthusiastic now, even to the point of talking to other companies about it."

Macheath: "Too enthusiastic - he wants to go too quickly. But you don't pick up the skills that way."

Kirknatch: "Macheath's right. It takes awhile to get a proper dialogue going. You can't get things hunky dory straight off - so don't get your expectations too high."

PART IV

TINY REVOLUTIONS :

MAINTAINED, COUNTER AND NEGOTIATED DEFINITIONS

CHAPTER 1

EMERGING DEFINITIONS

The first few meetings of the Packaging Group were surprisingly low-key affairs. By that I mean that the general atmosphere was fairly amiable, with most people behaving in a polite manner and the meetings conducted in a 'business-like' fashion. There was little evidence of the expected 'heat' generated by the confrontation over personalised attacks. Clearly the warnings and definitional frame provided by the consultants and others had had some effect. However, even at the earliest of stages there were hints of the potential for conflict and acrimony lurking beneath the surface. There was certainly an element of pushing and probing; a testing out of the ground.

The very first meeting began with an introduction by the appointed chairman, Mike Kerrick, the Director of Pharmaceutical Production and therefore the head of the division of which Packaging was a part. His presentation reiterated those aspects of management definitions already encountered and gave nothing new. He spoke, for instance, of the importance of improving 'lateral and vertical communication'. He concluded by saying that "We will probably look back to this as one of the most significant changes in the division; indeed the site."

He was followed by P. Sherry, who gave yet another performance of his slide-show with little of significance added. However, he did stress, as reported in the official minutes that:"... the lessons learnt from the activities of the Group would be vital in extending a framework of participation throughout the whole site which was one of the major objectives."

The very first issue on the agenda would seem harmless enough, 'contact with constituents/groups'; but even here there were the glimmerings of a power struggle. Some of the reps. requested that they be allowed to meet with their constituents at least once a month to discuss issues pertaining to the participation meetings. After some debate, Mike Kerrick offered:

> "What opportunities are there for using natural breaks?"
>
> Anne: "We don't have one."
>
> Chris: "There is a problem with having breaks; it would interfere with my band arrangements."
>
> (The production area consists of a number of packing lines each embodying a complete packaging cycle. Each line may at any time be engaged in the packing of a different product range. Girls on the shop-floor are assigned to these 'bands' for given periods of time, although they can often be switched around at the discretion of the supervisors as production requires.)
>
> Macheath: "There may be natural groups that share natural breaks."
>
> Chris: "Well, there's the label room - but then they are linked to the porters. It would not be too bad in the Penicillin area, we can perhaps get them together."
>
> Christie: "Well, (doubtfully) it's not that easy."
>
> Kerrick: "Can we perhaps go away and see how we can utilise natural breaks."
>
> (There is a brief digression here)
>
> Cyril: "Can I help out here. Perhaps for Penicillin we could use the showering time at the end of the day, and then use teabreaks in the main area."
>
> Christie: "The end of the day is not such a good idea, people would not be as interested at that time. It would be better to use teabreaks."

After some more general discussion relating to the whole reporting-back procedure, including the question of the timing and distribution

of minutes, some tentative agreed principles began to emerge. But the issue resurfaces and there is a clearer impression of management's reluctance:

> Cyril: "Is there a time limit on this." (these rep.-constituent meetings.)
>
> Chris: "Yes. We need this really."
>
> Peter: "I tried to discuss this agenda (holds up agenda for the meeting in progress) over the teabreak ... it was virtually impossible."
>
> Chris: "Yes. But we've got to define the time period. If people have a really burning issue, the onus is on them. We can't sensibly consider an open-ended meeting."

Both Sherry and Kerrick had made much of their 'commitment' to the scheme and had stressed how important the thing was being viewed by management. Here the extent of that commitment is being tested out in practical terms. Management are loath to trade off valuable production time for shop-floor meeting time. It is part of the existing division of prerogatives, of course, that management groups would be able to schedule time for participation pre- and post-meetings into their routine working arrangements with no difficulty. The shop-floor are being asked to prepare their material outside of active work time. The result would be pressure of time and facilities on the shop-floor reps.

Part of the tone is already established in this exchange. The shop-floor put in a request, management consider it and pressure a decision. The interests of management, indexed in this instance by the priority afforded to production requirements, supercede the demands of the workforce. This does not deny that there is not a dynamic in which the reps. are able to put their view and to challenge the reasons given by the management reps. The trade union movement, of course, recognised long ago the need for their officers to have

adequate facilities and time to administer their duties on site; that battle is still, to some extent, being fought.

As a point of information relating to the procedures of participation, the minutes record that the following arrangements were agreed upon:

> "1. Verbal feedback should be given on the day of the meeting (exclusing shift personnel not on duty).
>
> 2. This feedback should take place in 10-15 minute sessions around natural breaks. These should be arranged by discussions between representatives and supervisor to take account of the different working arrangements in various parts of the area.
>
> 3. Minutes should be distributed to everyone in the Packaging area within 2-4 days and also on notice-boards.
>
> 4. A pre-meeting of 15-20 minutes should be held 2-3 days prior to the next group meeting to formulate issues. This should not be a discussion meeting.
>
> 5. The procedure will be reviewed at the next meeting."

In this first meeting and subsequently there was evidence of a certain interactional pattern whereby issues were presented by the shop-floor and management responded in what might be described as a traditional fashion. For instance, there was a tendency for management members to counter an issue with a variant of 'we know about that, and something is being done'. Often the nature of that 'something' was not fully explicated, or was only expanded upon after continued pressure. The issue might be seen as legitimately raised by the shop-floor but it was effectively 'owned' by management. The responsibility for dealing with the issue and the criteria for implementing and evaluating any action was retained by management. Frequently this attitude was colluded with by the reps., they seemed willing to cede that authority to management, although from time to

time, they were more assertive. The representatives were being positioned into the familiar role of passivity and were, by and large, accepting it. The paternalistic mode continued to operate.

Another feature of the continuation of traditional responses by the management members was to provide answers to queries in purely financial terms. Reasons for inactivity were justified solely in economic terms as if that were the only criteria worthy of consideration. Indeed, on past occasions the shop-floor membership had expressed frustration at the habituation of this type of reply. Expecially so when they were unfamiliar with the details of the financial machinations and were left uninformed. Too often, it was suggested, the response 'it's too costly' or variants of the cost justifying the action, was presented baldly and taken as wholly adequate. There is a kind of mismatching discourse here where the interests of management are encapsulated in a language of finance and the interests of the shop-floor are couched in other terms.

The exchanges relating to two other issues in the very first meeting also proved quite revealing. It will be recalled that management had consistently proposed information-sharing and communications as vital elements in the network of meanings surrounding participation. There is perhaps a detectable tendency in what I have said so far to underplay the importance of these two, especially in relation to other possible alternatives such as sharing in decision-making. However, the grievance procedure and the role of personnel items showed how vital the provision of information can be when one starts from a position of ignorance.

When the grievance issue was raised at the meeting some managerial eyebrows were lifted when Anne said:

"People don't know what it is or how to use it."

The discussion that followed revealed that there was indeed a good deal of confusion and ignorance. Macheath had to go to great lengths to explain the procedure. People on the shop-floor were extremely wary of using a scheme that entailed them going to their immediate supervisors in the first case:

Christie: "If there is a grievance, people wouldn't dream of going to Cyril ... he's an ogre type."

However, they were certainly glad to have the system explained to them and suggested that what they had been told would be enlightening to their membership.

Similarly with the question of the role of personnel. The point was raised in a seemingly straightforward manner, but, as the discussion developed, the extent of the failure to inform people of this vital company function became apparent. Again, people were concerned that supervision had to be approached by a member of the shop-floor if they wanted to visit personnel:

Anne: "But some people might not want to go to Cyril, they may be frightened."

Peter: "A real issue is only so to the individual concerned - only he can determine if it is."

John: "Personnel are always available - but it is important, you know, to come through normal channels - just to say you want to see personnel."

Betty: "Some of my people tell me they don't know who personnel are."

Chris: (amazed)"You don't know who the area personnel rep. is?"

(Each section of the site has a personnel officer appointed to service that specific area.)

Anne & Iris together: "No. Some don't."

Cyril: "They ought to, there has been enough contact."

Chris: (still incredulous) "You don't even know who the area personnel rep. is?"

Anne: "No. Even I didn't until we did that re-signing of the contracts last week."

When it is explained to the members that everyone has a right to access to personnel and further, that they also had the right to a confidential interview, some seemed genuinely surprised, not to say relieved:

Peter: "Is that sort of meeting feasible now?"

Macheath: "Yes, definitely."

Peter: "Well, that reassures me, and it will a lot of other people too."

The meeting had succeeded in apprising the shop-floor of some of their most basic and fundamental rights. That sort of information is clearly of extreme importance to the shop-floor membership. However, two points still need to be made. Firstly, the exchange had revealed some of the deep-seated suspicions that the shop-floor held in relation to their supervisors. In both cases they were ill at ease with a system that put Cyril and his section supervisors at the first point of contact. Reference back to some of the operatives conceptions of the nature of that relationship helps to explain why. Secondly, there must be a serious question mark over the management, and the personnel department for not making clear to the workforce what their rights were. Again, earlier comments about not being informed of things etc. are born out in a practical instance here.

At the end of the first meeting an issue was raised as being 'difficult' and brought up at that meeting only to be clarified so that preparation could be undertaken in readiness for the next meeting.

It is the interactions around this issue, perhaps more than any other in these early meetings that captures some of the definitional processes referred to at the beginning of this section. That issue was noted in the minutes as: "The absence of the definition of unpaid leave."

Management and the consultants were aware of the potential difficulties in 'handling' this issue, indeed it was one of those that had come to be labelled by them as 'sensitive'. The 'preparation time' was as much for their benefit as for anything else.

The issue was mentioned publicly by Cyril in the first instance although it had already been mentioned to the consultants and myself by members of the workforce. Cyril was himself uncertain how to interpret the policy or even if there was one. From his point of view there was provision in the company for ten 'Tridy Days', as they were referred to. Each employee was potentially able to make use of these 'holidays', in addition to normal holiday entitlements, to be used up at some time throughout the year for special purposes. They would be considered as uncertified leave. Cyril was unclear whether this meant that members could take this 'unpaid leave' when they wanted it, or whether its granting was at the discretion of supervision. He felt that the latter was the case and that was how he had been interpreting it. The question then arose; are there any guidelines as to what constitutes an acceptable reason for the granting of unpaid leave? Also, what would the procedure be if individuals requested unpaid leave when they had already used up their 'Tridy Days'?

At the second meeting the floor was given to Macheath:

Macheath: "I'm grateful to those who raised this issue, there are a number of things that come out of it. I must be clear and say firstly that there was a stupidity. In the manual (company policy manual) there was a statement suggesting that there was no such thing as unauthorised leave without pay.

"But clearly there are instances where this is necessary. I would like to suggest that there are special cases and that decisions can be made at the supervisor's discretion after discussions with personnel."

"The whole policy on absence is currently being re-written to try to improve and clarify the situation."

Kerrick: "This is a site issue - we want to get consistency. This is why we want personnel involved, to help get some consistency. It is not our policy to encourage unpaid leave; although we now recognise that there may be occasions when it is necessary."

Anne: "So what is the position now. If, say, I can't get into work tonight for some reason, do I have to take it as a holiday?"

Macheath: (makes some confusing comments about ' it depends on the circumstances and repeats what he had said previously) "One important thing we want is for people to tell us first, before they stay out, not after."

Kirknatch: "I think what people want to know is, what counts as special circumstances. At the moment the scheme fosters dishonesty."

Cyril: "It causes problems for supervision. We don't like this situation either."

Macheath: "Well, I think there has to be room for flexibility on this."

Kerrick: "This is a difficult one. But let's be clear - personnel are trying to write it up - we want to get consistency."

Sid: "What happens if you're totally committed to your holiday plans, all the time is used up - you're all booked up. Then you have to miss a day - how can it be taken off your holiday time?"

Cyril: "One ought to be able to organise oneself. Should put aside days from the proper holiday entitlement for those odd occasions when you need to take a day off."

Sid: (angrily) "It's all right for you to say that."

I am less concerned with the content of the debate here and the merits or otherwise of the various points of view put forward, than with the style and tone of the exchange. Note firstly that the chair-

man gives the first opportunity to Macheath. This continues the pattern of management responding to issues raised and deeming their explanations as adequate and full. Indeed, Macheath became increasingly exasperated that the issue wouldn't lie down and that his explanations were not accepted. Considering the comments made at the last meeting about the suspicions the shop-floor had about their supervisors, it is perhaps a little surprising that Macheath should again here invest them with the responsibility for deciding on this sensitive area. It is also fairly clear that the personnel department had been caught on the hop. They admitted to a confusion in company policy and had not been prepared for this issue to assume this degree of importance. They were fighting a rearguard action and doing much repair work.

Kerrick introduces a justification that was to become very familiar as things went on. He attempted to deflect the argument by suggesting that it was a 'site' issue. His statement attempts to close off the issue by placing it beyond the environs of this group. It was an issue that could only be decided outside of the meeting and with the specialist involvement of the personnel department. It was a matter of company policy site-wide; participation, at this level, is defined as not extending to that type of issue. When the issue is not dropped, there is an attempt to mask the confusion of the personnel department with an obfuscatory monologue. The attempt to obtain further clarity by Kirknatch is allowed to pass by. Macheath attempts to head off further counteractions by the introduction of the vague 'Flexibility'. Finally, Kerrick manages to shut the issue down by pointing to it's complexity, and by handing over responsibility to personnel.

There is a point in the interaction when previous attempts to locate the supervisors as the seat of trouble and conflict comes unstuck. Cyril expresses his own dissatisfaction with the situation. There are the merest traces here of the power-struggle shifting ground. Line management are distanced here from the machinations of other levels of management. However, Cyril's patronising response to Sid indicates that there is no unification of line management with the shop-floor.

Management are clearly on the defensive here. They have, they seem to feel, had some confusions exposed and are desperately trying to repair the situation. But they definitely want to keep possession of the issue. There is no willingness to explore possible solutions in the much vaunted 'discussions' with the shop-floor reps. In traditional fashion they will sort things out and let people know what they decide. The same attitude was adopted with respect to some of the other items raised at this first meeting. The point was taken up by the consultants at the next Steering Group meeting. As it was recorded in the minutes:

> "Too many issues had been referred outside the group, thereby limiting the group's opportunity to influence decisions."

From the reactions of the representatives after the meeting and on hearing some of the views of their members at their next pre-meeting, it was clear that there was continued disquiet about the unpaid leave issue and the way it was handled at the meeting. People were still confused as to their entitlements and were unhappy about the responsibility residing with their immediate supervision: 'that needs clarifying', 'everybody says something different', 'the personnel ought to be able to tell us', were some of the reactions from members.

At the start of the next meeting, perhaps heedful of the consultants comments at the Steering Group meeting, Kerrick kicked off with a slightly different tone. In relation to an issue concerning canteen facilities, for instance, he stated that:

> "This group could perhaps put its views forward as to how they want to run the thing."

and:

> "Whatever we do, we need to get people's views and then see that people adhere to whatever is decided."

However, when it came to the issue of 'absence reporting', as he referred to it, he introduced a curious diversion. He called upon Macheath to run through some company absence figures from different sections of the company. Macheath went into a fairly detailed explanation of some of the absence figures for the recent past. Referring to the statistics, he pointed out that there had been a marginal decline over the last year. The absence rate had fallen below 4%, which, as he suggested, was lower than the national average. He proposed that the figures revealed a very creditable record. Kerrick takes up the theme and says that the actual figures will be included in the minutes, but he runs through some of them there and then. At the end of the presentation, Macheath, looking self-satisfied, asks: "Are you surprised?"

Members of the shop-floor seemed prepared to accept that the figures did look impressively low. But there is some bemusement as to the point of the exercise. It is the department head, Chris, who first gives expression to these feelings:

Chris: "Is that issue finished now then?"

Macheath: "It's part of the whole question of absence and absence policy."

Chris: "So the major issue is still not resolved?"

Pauline: "People are still concerned about the circumstances for unpaid leave."

Cyril: "This all goes through personnel now."

Pauline: "What does that mean?"

Macheath: "Unpaid leave is now a recognised category - we are trying to firm up on the circumstances."

Amy: "So it goes straight through personnel now, does it?"

Macheath: (somewhat flustered) "The supervisors are still the focal point but personnel are the final arbiters. We need to clarify all possible reasons and devise a policy - we are working on this. In the time being we need to assess each case individually. So you must go through your superior who will then refer to personnel."

Once again, there are elements of a collusion between Kerrick and Macheath to enable the management side to take the initiative. Indeed, there had clearly been a good measure of preparation for the presentation of this issue. The point of the display of absence figures is never made explicit. However, at one point Macheath says: "So it's not really such a great problem." The talk attempts to relate the specific issue of unpaid leave to the more general one of absence. With that connection made the implication is that the figures for absence are really rather good and not really a problem at all, ergo, the issue of unpaid leave is not really such a great problem after all. The logic is dubious; the rhetoric is effective, to a degree. The reps. were impressed by the figures. The presentation also served to usefully confuse the issue, effectively masking the central point of interest to the reps. behind this farrago of statistical evidence and argumentation. It is noticeable that it is Chris, despite his own confusion, that begins to question the gambit. Clearly he had not been taken into the confidence of his senior management and was as confused as others as to the import of what was being said.

Cyril had by this time opted to wipe his hands of the affair and seemed happy to let personnel stew in its own juices.

Management again had tried to close the issue off, this time by a combination of suggesting that the issue was not important enough to generate any great concern, and by what can only be taken as a deliberately confusing and embedding of the issue. This in conjunction with the continued possession of the issue by personnel. The question of undermining an issue by suggesting that it was really not that important recurred at other times. Again, it partly indexes a mismatching of interests; what is perceived as important by the shop-floor might not be perceived as important by the management. But, more significantly, management are attempting to define issues in their own terms and in so doing preventing other definitions from attaining precedence. It is, of course, extremely patronising to presume to identify what are other people's real problems. It is the attitude of the 'expert' over the ignorant, the powerful over the meek.

The presentation could be said to have been effective, in the short term. The reaction of the reps. at the meeting was extremely muted. The management had succeeded to that degree in closing down the issue. But they were misguided if they felt that they had killed the issue off.

Once again, subsequent conversations with the reps. and members of the shop-floor revealed that they were still not satisfied, and that, if anything people were more confused and angry than ever. To some extent management had succeeded in creating their own monster.

Early on in the next meeting, Peter, perhaps reflecting on the appearance of the Kerrick/Macheath statistics lesson of the preceding meeting, but also for other reasons, declared that "It's a bit of a mystery to me how the agenda gets devised." Nonetheless at this

meeting the agenda again referred to points arising from the preceding, and Kerrick was able to give another report on 'absence reporting'. However, on the same agenda 'unpaid leave' was also itemised. The original conflation of these issues is now dropped and management are prepared to consider them separately. In relation to the question of absence reporting, Kerrick merely points out that recently the figures had shown a slight increase and promises to attach the figures to the minutes. The issue had become a complete damp squid and had transmuted into an information-sharing issue from management to the shop-floor. The 'unpaid leave' item was not so easily dispatched.

Pauline: "The girls are still not happy. If they feel they need unpaid leave, why can't they have it - after all it's their loss of money. (derisive laughter from management). There was a girl in my section who wanted to take the day off to take a relative to hospital for a serious operation, even she was refused. Other people don't ask for permission, they just take the time and say they were ill or something. It's the honest ones that get penalised. Some people think that there is no way of getting unpaid leave now."

Chris: "I've been a critic of this system for a long time."

Macheath: (with some measure of exasperation) "One of the problems with a group like this is ... we're all looking for an instant decision when often there just isn't one. In the real world there aren't always simple, neat solutions to everything."

Cyril: (picking up on Pauline's point) "That girl you referred to - she already owed me four days, that's why she was refused."

(There is some argumentation between Cyril and Pauline about the case that was not easy to record.)

Chris: "I can't see why the girls can't see our point of view. You can't just take days off like that - you can't just have unpaid leave. We wouldn't be able to plan or anything."

Anne: "But that's too extreme. We know that people have to give a good explanation of why they want the time off."

Chris: (running his hand through his hair) "But what is a good explanation?"

Pauline: " Well, I reckon that girl in my section had a good reason. What do I tell her?"

Anne: "Yeah. And what happens if a girl uses up her holiday times."

Cyril: "There is a way round it ... but we are really waiting for personnel to come up with the solution."

Macheath: "The problem has been that things have been decided arbitrarily .. But there isn't a real answer here - there are going to be areas of disagreement. We want to get a policy though, where we can cover most of the issues. You'll always get some dispute, you must accept that. We will try and get a firmer policy. In the interim there will have to be ad hoc decisions, at present the personnel director is making the ultimate decisions."

Iris: "Aren't people going to be encouraged to be dishonest; to say next time, 'blow it' - and then just go sick. No one could really argue then."

Macheath: "That's always a risk with any policy on this."

Kerrick: "I feel I must draw this to a close - we could go on all day. We've discussed it a lot at the last few meetings. We need to wrap it up now. I'm sorry it's still a bit loose and that there isn't a really permanent answer."

Chris: "I do feel strongly about this too. It's not the people who are off every now and then, some people really abuse the system. It is they that make the system unfair. It is important to make a system that is ... tighter."

Kirknatch: "This is a very important issue, I feel. People are talking about what is fair and equitable. Clearly people have differing ideas about what is fair. The problem will not go away until people are clear about these differences and they are sorted out."

Macheath: "You're just putting on your academic hat now. You will always have the problem of different views."

Kirknatch: "I don't disagree. But I'm suggesting that this group, seeing that personnel are working on the policy right now, ought to put forward its views to them. What things do different people see as fair, as reasonable reasons."

Kerrick: "But how can you identify all the issues - you can't itemise all possible issues."

Cyril: "In answer to Howard (Kirknatch), I hope when personnel get sorted out, and they get some proposals - I hope they do come back and let us discuss the proposals."

Kirknatch: "One way the group can act constructively is for them to go away and discuss this with their groups, specifically to go over the types of circumstances they would think were fair and reasonable for unpaid leave to be granted."

Macheath: (heatedly) "Let's put this in context; there have only been a very few cases in the past few months."

Kerrick: (also exasperated) "We have been discussing this for months and there have really only been a few cases. We could do as Howard suggests, but the important thing as I see it is to get personnel to get on with their policy work as quickly as possible."

It must be remembered that the problem of unpaid leave was not an isolated incident but a part of a continuing process over a period of time. It was not on this issue alone that some small changes in style; in definition, began to surface. But this issue more than any other at that time focused the struggle in which definitions were represented and attempts made to sustain them, and where counter-definitions began to emerge.

At the most simple level, the issue had not been allowed to die; management had been unable to close it off despite various rhetorical ploys. The workforce had been placed in the traditional position of passive recipients of the wisdom and goodwill of a 'caring' management. Initially they had responded to that in the way they always had; acquiesing to that imposition. Remember the comments at the outset

about management being there to manage etc. At the first meetings the definition of participation as an information-sharing mechanism gained ascendancy. Management adopted its usual dominant position as the party responsible for actions and decisions. The workforce accepted the corollary position of passivity; they brought the issues and management responded. There was much that happened in the early meetings that contrived to make that situation acceptable. Many 'hygiene' issues raised by the shop-floor were readily and expeditiously resolved by the management. New seats were introduced in coffee areas; lighting was improved; the heating was fixed; the company even had on-site banking facilities now (although this was brought up at the participation meeting, it was already at the planning stage, and proved quite fortuitous for management). Other issues had been treated with a laudable degree of equanimity for the most part. Certainly all had not run smoothly but the pattern outlined above had seemed to provide some dividends in the first stages.

But, of course, many of these issues were of no direct threat to managerial prerogatives, and as long as the shop-floor were willing to cede responsibility for the problems and their solutions to the management personnel, then participation could not become such a threat either. In other words as long as certain of the definitions that management had proffered for some time continued to hold sway then 'unhealthy' confrontation could be avoided and the scheme could be allowed to run its smooth course.

Initially the issue of unpaid leave was defined in a similar way. Management accepted that there was a problem but they would now go away and sort it out. The members would be duly informed. References were made to the site-wide nature of the problem and the need for consistency. It is noticeable in the third meeting how Kerrick is prepared to hand over some responsibility for the issue to

the shop-floor on a relatively routine hygiene issue, but does not consider it expedient to offer the same privilege in the case of unpaid leave.

Various other attempts were made to 'lose' the issue, including the 'this-isn't-really-an-issue' ploy, and by camouflaging it in a welter of non-relevant detail. However, with some prodding from the consultants, the issue was not allowed to quietly wither away and die. Mere assurances from management came to be perceived as insufficient. In addition to the shop-floor reps., certain of the management nominees were also responsible for keeping the issues open. Cyril had a vested interest since much of the responsibility for policing the policy fell on his shoulders. Both he and Chris would have to cope with any consequences of a change in policy in terms of production scheduling. Both, too, shared the confusion of the workforce and were keen to see the issue sorted out. Neither was taken into the confidence of the more senior management members and their machinations. As a result, much of the talk employed by Macheath and Kerrick to lay the issue to rest was as alien and confusing to them as it was to anyone else. It only served to spur them into giving voice to their concern,thereby stirring the issue up once again.

This was another aspect of the subtle changes in the patterns of interaction that occurred as the scheme progressed. The more issues approached the sensitive ground of senior management's 'right' to take control and responsibility for issues, the more the position of line management became unsettled. On many simpler issues things were so defined that all levels of management could make a unified response. But with an issue like unpaid leave, line management too were made aware of their dependence on the will of their superiors.

The power issue shifted up a scale and senior management became defensive when their own authority came under challenge. They cut themselves off from their line managers and attempted to erect barriers along all fronts. It is not too fanciful to suggest that such an action thrust line management closer to the position of the shop-floor membership; an arrangement that further increased senior management's defensiveness. Increasingly line management took a more active part in the proceedings. They brought their own issues and began to act independently of a 'company' position. Line management became aware that they could, and should, represent their own interests and not merely attempt to reflect what they saw as the company's interests. However, as Cyril's comments in the last reported meeting show, they were not, as yet, willing to adopt a pro-active posture, but were willing to display their recognition of the nature of their relationship to senior management.

Senior management seemed unable to see the issue in other than concrete terms. For them it was but another issue, albeit a complicated one, that they were prepared to make some effort to clarify. They could not understand why it had assumed so much importance to the shop-floor. And, indeed, as a mere issue to be solved it was perhaps not originally that important to the workforce. It was not the content of the issue as such that generated so much concern, but rather the way it was handled, and associated questions of principle. The issue was as much about the growing awareness among the shop-floor that they might be able to define participation in ways other than that presented to them by management. It reflects an increasing disenchantment with the definition that casts them in a wholly passive position with management assuming the traditional dominant posture of taking over the issue and presenting the workforce with the solution they felt most appropriate. For the reps. there existed a type

of organisational imperative that fostered such a counter-definition. They had been receiving increasingly negative reactions from their members in terms of 'nothing is really being done', and 'they (management) always have snap answers', 'they just go away and make the decisions that suit them'. There was some pressure on the reps. to demonstrate that they could be effective at the meetings, that they could get across the views of their members and influence things.

The issue was not so much about the machinery of an unpaid leave policy as about more fundamental questions of fairness and equity, and who had the right to decide what these were. Although not normally addressed in these terms, it was these more vital concerns that were at the heart of the debate. To that extent the issue assumed a greater importance than many of the other 'working conditions' issues. The issue struck more at the heart of managerial prerogative. It challenged more overtly the whole paternalistic culture of the company that cares and will make decisions that protect the interests of its workforce. It challenges the right of sectional interests to decide unilaterally on such moral issues as 'what is fair'. Looming up, of course, could be questions of who has the right to decide what is a fair wage etc. The issue begins to move toward a challenge of the power structure of the organisation. Participation is being redefined to extend to those major issues of company policy, of the rights of decision-making. It is not saying assertively that the workforce should be able to take part in those decisions but it is questioning exactly who has that right and how is it justified.

Macheath continues with the language of ownership: "We will ... get a firmer policy", "we are trying ...". The issue 'belongs' to personnel and senior management, people must trust them to work out as fair a policy as can be expected. People will have disagreements about what 'we' decide but that is just an inevitability

in 'the real world' (a favourite expression of his, especially in conversations with the consultants.) The encroaching meanings of participation are being excluded here on the grounds that they belong to the realm of the Unreal. Participation is being folded into a particular language of reality, that reality being understood and interpretable by Macheath. It is the language of the status quo masquerading as the language of commonsense and naturalness. It is the language of the self appointed expert and master passing for the language of Everyman. There is little need to comment on the extent to which the language here deviates from most of the rhetoric with which he, and others, had sought to market participation.

The language of the shop-floor body, however, was still the language of protest only. To that degree, it was still a passive language. They are still imprisoned in that position where they offer something up to management, even if it is criticism, waiting for a response (even if they demand one). There has still been little attempt on their part to assume ownership of the issue, or to seek to actively take control of the problem and responsibility for action pertaining to it. Such passivity cedes the initiative to management, and puts them in a stronger position to define the problem in the way they see fit. But even at the last meeting here there is the beginnings of a move to make a more positive contribution. Even Cyril comments that he feels the group should be allowed to discuss any proposals that management devise.

The issue did not end at this point.

CHAPTER 2

REACTING TO PARTICIPATION

As the meetings continued the shop-floor reps, naturally became involved in a discourse of their own outside of the direct influence of management. In conversations amongst themselves and with their members emerged another interactional mix that contributes to the definitional process. I spent a good deal of time talking to both the reps. and the rest of the workforce to try and gauge what meanings were taking shape in that quarter. Of course, representing group views in this way distorts the individuality of some of the reactions but is a necessary partial reporting, for the sake of parsimony if nothing else. However, as would be expected, the meanings emerging do not conform to a unified, linear, non-contradictory pattern, and I shall attempt to retain that sense of diversity and confusion.

I reported that after the 'training session' and the first meeting, there was a sense of optimism and of being a part of something important among the reps., albeit tempered by a certain cautiousness. The rest of the workforce, however, did not entirely share those feelings. At this point one must recall the sense of futility expressed by the operatives previously: the view that things had been tried in the past and nothing had really happened. Recall those conversations in which they doubted management's intentions, and the opinion that management would not alter things unless it was in <u>their</u> interests. By talking to the workforce and attending some of the reporting-back and pre-meetings it became apparent that the initiation of the scheme had done little to dispel those views.

The representatives reported that they had experienced some problems of apathy amongst their members. It was proving difficult to get the workforce to take an active interest. Some reps. said that their members were often quite keen to hear what had happened at the last meeting but were less forthcoming when it came to actually bringing forward and discussing their own issues. The apathy seemed closely linked with continued expressions of scepticism. The reps. reported that their members still doubted that anything of any value would be achieved, or, that they doubted whether management were really committed to changing things, or that management would be prepared to cede any significant concessions to the workforce or relinquish to them any real power. The workforce seemed disinclined to take the scheme seriously, suggested the reps. Indeed, at the group meetings, this attitude became apparent with the issues generally being discussed, if at all, in a light-hearted manner. There was no sense of preparing a case with the expectation that results would be attained. Some operatives concurred with this view and suggested that many people did not take it seriously and only saw it as an opportunity to 'skive off' work for a few minutes. Between meetings, the reps. were not approached by members with burning issues; everything waited until the formal meeting and required the initiation of the rep.

However, some of the reps. did suggest that some of the scepticism and apathy had diminished after the first meeting had actually taken place. Almost as if some doubted that the scheme would actually get off the ground. People came and asked for the minutes and were keen to know what had taken place. But the response was not positive in the sense of the members approaching the scheme pro-actively. The scheme was being tested; the workforce were waiting to see how management would respond, ready to pounce on the expected failure to take note of the shop-floor views. For instance, one of

Peter's constituents adopted a very off-hand posture in relation to the scheme and expressed continued scepticism that anything would be conceded by management. However, he was one of the most vociferous in his complaints about the current situation. He would talk at great length about various issues, and then disown them. The attitude was, 'well here are some problems, I don't think anything will be done about them, but you go away and see if you can prove me wrong.' As reflected in the early meetings themselves, issues and grievances were put forward and management were supposed to act on them. The criteria were the responsiveness of management; the onus was on them to come up with the goods, to demonstrate to the workforce the honesty of their intentions.

The discourse of the workforce before the meetings got under way was shot through with expressions of doubt and scepticism; a 'nothing will happen' script. After the first meetings that mode of talk continued with 'a nothing has happened' script that confirmed the veracity of their first opinions. There were repeated expressions to the effect that management would not really change anything, and that any movement that was perceived was seen as 'too slow'.

R.I.W.: "What's the general feeling on the shop-floor?" (about the scheme)

Op: "Well generally they feel that not enough has been done. I mean some think it's a good idea, but others think it's a waste of time, they feel the management won't change things."

Op: "We're not really getting the issues through - we keep saying what about this, what about that, but all Pauline can say is 'Oh that's coming up at the next meeting, that's coming up at the meeting after'."

And again in response to a general question about the scheme so far:

Op: "Don't think a lot of it really."

Op: "Nothing has happened really - management won't change things if they don't want to."

Preliminary definitions had sought to make a specific association between participation and change, however unspecified the nature of the change. The workforce clearly accepted that definition and were prepared to evaluate the scheme in terms of the degree of perceived change. Even after a few meetings the shop-floor were still of the opinion that nothing had changed, that participation had not effected the changes they thought it should, although it was never clear what the nature of those changes would or should be. Even after certain things had been taken action on after a meeting, there was a tendency to elide those changes and assert that nothing had happened. The reps. also reported that they felt that their members were perhaps less aware than they were that things had been happening. However others, like Peter, were aware that their members saw that most of the issues dealt with in the first few meetings were not significant, and that any actions taken only represented a minimal effort on the part of management to ameliorate certain adverse working conditions. There did seem to be a continued scepticism that the status quo would not be affected. On this view, participation, if it is anything, has to be about something more than the management responding to shop-floor moans about 'hygiene' factors. For these people the scheme had not really been tested, since crucial issues relating to management's willingness to make significant concessions had not yet been confronted. However it must be made clear that the workforce seemed very unclear as to what a significant test would look like, or what sort of issues would demonstrate that changes of a positive nature had been effected.

Similar attitudes were expressed in relation to work relationships. Certain of the reps. reported that they had been somewhat sur-

prised by the style and approach of the management reps., especially those from their own line management. By this they meant that there had been a more friendly and open response from the line management than they had expected. Some suggested that they had been less aggressive and less defensive than they had thought they would be. This slightly more positive relationship between the reps. and line management continued to develop in some quarters, although it was maintained by others that there was a certain amount of slippage. However, the remainder of the shop-floor appeared not to notice any change in style or attitude or denied that any had taken place. Indeed many of the complaints against supervision were reiterated after the scheme had been under way for some time. Below are some of the things said to me in relation to line management by shop-floor operatives:

Op: "No they still treat us in the same way. They are still just the same. They treat us in a very rude fashion. I mean we even get whistled when they want something. We never see Chris - he doesn't even speak to us, not even if you say 'hello'."

Op: "Yeah, John actually whistled a girl the other day... like calling a dog. He's just dead ignorant."

R.I.W.: "Some of the reps. feel they have changed, and that they act quite pleasantly at the meetings."

Op: "Yeah, they may act differently at the meetings but what's the good of that."

R.I.W.: "Well nothing in itself, but if they can change there we may be able to change them in other areas too."

Op: "I doubt it."

However, as the meetings continued, there was a noticeable lessening in the degree of criticism levelled at line management. Other issues became more important and some realisation came about that other more senior members of management were open to criticism for their

behaviour at the meetings.

The workforce continued to doubt the intentions of the management in introducing such a scheme. The rumour continued to circulate that it had only been introduced as a means of forestalling the unions:

Op: "A number of the girls on the floor reckon that the company has brought you in as a stall to the unions."

R.I.W.: "Are there any union members on the floor?"

Op: "No."

Op: "Things got quite heated last year, especially after the St. Munstey (the other Tridy manufacturing site) people came down - that's when it all started."

This opinion is clearly associated with the scepticism of the workforce. They doubted that management would, or could change things; and in the absence of any other motivation concluded that management were concerned with protecting their interests by keeping the unions out of the company. Not that the workforce had even expressed any strong desire to become affiliated to the trade union movement.

Associated with this talk about senior management were some queries about their ability to control what occurred at the participation meetings. A number of the workforce were of the opinion that management, especially through Kerrick, retained a tight control on what took place at the meetings. It was suggested that they somehow always seemed to know what was going to be brought up at the meetings and always had an answer ready that finished the issue off. A number referred specifically to the unpaid leave issue and expressed concern with the way it had been dealt with. There was a suggestion that management were being made privy to information that should have remained secret until the meetings. There was some slight accusation that the consultants were responsible for the leakage. There was also some

attribution of almost mystical omnipotence to management; they magically knew exactly what the shop-floor were currently concerned about and prepared a case accordingly. Some identified this power more concretely and questioned the orignation and distribution of the agenda, something that was to exercise the reps. subsequently. The following exchange gives a flavour of these points and indexes some others:

Op: "We are not really getting the issues through. When we want to bring something up, management say it's not time yet ... they control what issues get considered."

Op: "Yes. Even when issues are discussed the answers given have not been satisfactory. For example that unpaid leave thing, we are still not at all clear about that. And the answer given to Christie about the girl who applied for an internal post and everyone else knowing who had got the job before she did. Macheath and Chris merely said that 'it shouldn't happen but it can and does to anyone' ... what sort of answer is that?"

R.I.W.: (I explain some of the detail of the case but agree that some of the answers had not been adequate.)

Op: "They seem to have snap answers always. You go and see Cyril,say, with an issue and before you have time to say anything and explain, he tells you what he thinks the answer is and that's it."

R.I.W.: "Well, at the meetings there is an opportunity to put your point. We try and ensure that the case gets put and that management give reasons."

Op: "Yes, but still they seem to know just what's being brought up - they give a clever reply and that's the end of the matter. Cyril and the supervisors seem to know all about our meetings five minutes after we've had them; that shouldn't happen."

Some of the earlier expressions of powerlessness resurface here. Management are seen as being in control and a sense of futility colours any response. However the attitude is partnered by a language of passivity that voluntarily cedes responsibility to management. Participation, indeed all relations with management, are still caste in

terms that positions the shop-floor as docile, if put upon, recipients of managerial decisions and actions. Grievances are readily located and articulated but are merely presented to management for them to produce a solution. Issues require 'answers'; the workforce cite themselves as askers-of-questions immediately allowing management to covet the position of those who decide, give answers and take action. The workforce identify faults and injustices, often apportion blame to their managers and then request those same people to put things right on their behalf.

Part of the suspicion and mistrust apparent in the above exchange is engendered not by workforce-management relations, but by certain tensions amongst the workforce itself. Both reps. and the operatives themselves reported that a degree of acrimony had crept into the relations amongst the girls on the shop-floor. It was said that the post- and pre-meetings had become characterised by a 'bitchiness'. It will be recalled that earlier discourse had contained talk of certain junctions of conflict; between the day workers and the twilight shifts; between the machine operatives and the service engineers. However, there were now some new tensions identified, or old ones were said to be intensified. For some this new divisiveness was at least in part attributable to participation itself. In particular certain issues had divided the workforce, had brought to the fore differences of opinion and differences in aspirations. The very formality of the scheme had led to individuals being forced to take stances on issues, stances that proved to be in conflict with others.

Op: "It's getting bitchy too."

R.I.W.: "What, amongst the girls you mean or between you and other sections."

Op: "Yes, amongst the girls - one group says we should have this and another says no."

R.I.W.: "Don't you think the scheme can be used to solve that sort of thing .. and ought to."

Op: "Well, you can't really stop it, can you?"

R.I.W.: "Presumably these differences have always been there though?"

Op: "Well yes, but this participation thing has brought it all out. Before it was just between a few individuals .. arguments would be between people in little groups, it wouldn't affect anyone else .. but now it's in groups. It's all come to a head with this participation thing."

Revealed here is an unintended negative aspect of participation that is not usually alluded to. The workforce had repeatedly spoken of feelings of isolation and of the feeling that they all belong to different organisations. This was often ascribed to differential supervisory practices and/or poor communications. But here, and elsewhere, there is evidence of a lack of workforce solidarity. Many admitted that the disputes were often petty and that neither side had a case. Supervision constantly moved staff about, adding to the lack of unity. Much of the malaise could be attributed to a lack of understanding and communication between different sections of the workforce partly brought about by differential supervisory practices. This lack of consistency together with the alleged favouritism of the supervisors created divisions and feelings of envy and inequality. These generalised feelings of isolation, division and envy were given a concrete focus by the issues derived from participation.

Following from the last point and connecting with previous ones, many operatives reported that they felt that communications had not really improved as a result of participation. Some of the reps., too, concurred with that view. Although, clearly members did get to hear of those things discussed at the participation meetings, it was

suggested that communications that fell outside that auspices remained as poor as before. It is one of the major hazards of any participation scheme that it becomes institutionalised. Managers are careful to fulfil the formal requirements of the scheme, those portions that are public and checkable, but in those areas where participation does not formally penetrate there is an opportunity and a tendency to revert to more habitual practices. Senior management had stressed on innumerable occasions that participation in no way is designed to replace existing practices of informal communication etc. In this way participation was again intended to lie over existing arrangements not to challenge them. Such an attitude was exploitable and non-participation issues could be handled in traditional ways; which meant, in part, for the shop-floor, continuing poor communications and bad relations with supervision. It is noticeable, though, that the shop-floor appeared to continue operating on those same definitions presented by management and the consultants at the outset. Participation would be expected to have something to do with changes in the patterns and quality of information-sharing and information, and in the relationships between the shop-floor and line-management. These had been taken on board and were to some extent being employed as criteria of evaluation in relation to the scheme.

Not all reactions to the scheme were in such negative terms. I have already indicated that some of the workforce had maintained that they had begun to notice some changes. There had been some appreciation that certain factors relating to working conditions had been improved even if such things were not seen as highly significant, and in some cases were already in process prior to participation. It has also been suggested that there had been some lessening of anti-

supervision vitriolic. John was now talked of as merely incompetent and foolish rather than malicious. Some suggested that the problem of staff being moved willy-nilly from work band to work band without consultation or explanation had lessened or was handled with a little more sensitivity. The alleged rudeness of Chris was now more often attributed to a personal idiosyncrasy rather than a deliberate snub to the operatives. Cyril was referred to by some as being 'more friendly now'. Line management, where their behaviour was in question were being given the benefit of the doubt more readily than previously:

> Op: "At least he will listen to you now; before if you tried to make any points or suggestions, he would just say 'Rubbish', and put you down."

Most of the workforce reported that they were happy with their own area rep. They thought that they were doing the job well enough and were happy with reporting back procedures. A number said that they realised the difficulty of acting as representative and would not themselves like to undertake the task. Most were reasonably satisfied with the fact of Kerrick being the chairman and with the contributions of Macheath; although I have already made some references to some of the negative reactions of the shop-floor to the approach of senior management.

One of the most noticeable features of these discussions with the shop-floor was the continuation of traditional attitudes and ways of speaking about workplace relations and issues. They had clearly adopted the view that participation had something to do with change. In particular they expected that participation should entail changes in the way they talked about things and handled issues. As already pointed out, they continued to position themselves as docile recipients

of the harsh edges of management practice. Here they conform to the traditional ways of proceeding. By casting themselves in such a passive role they reciprocally position management in the active role.

Furthermore many of the operatives whilst continuing to feed issues up, were only critical of management to the extent that they failed to make clear cut decisions. When I explained an issue using the consultants script about management ultimately retaining their prerogative to make decisions there was no dissension and indeed a significant number of operatives nodded their heads in agreement. Elsewhere in relation to an issue about the right to take smoke breaks (a custom and practice raised by the department manager) the operatives positively asserted that management had a duty to take responsibility and make decisions and that it was not part of their (operatives) concerns. As part of the drift amongst the reps. to take a more proactive stance they had agreed to go away and seek the views and possible solutions of their members. The response indicates that the shop-floor as a whole had not shifted their definitions significantly since the start and that the reps. had moved on leaving the membership emeshed in the old discourse:

> Op: "Pauline says that the girls are asked to think about solutions but that is management's job. They should either say there will be no smoke breaks or that they will be allowed."

And as Pauline put it:

> Pauline: "A lot of people think it's management's problem. If they are concerned, why don't they just say 'No smoke breaks'.
>
> R.I.W.: "Well, I think they could do that, but they don't want to. Chris feels that with this type of thing, once it's established you can't just say 'stop' - people would be angry and still find a way of doing it anyway. I think he hopes there may be another way of doing it."

Pauline: "Hmm. But you know it was suggested that we as a group .. you know, the reps. and the rest of us .. should think about it and try and think of ways round it. But the girls just say it's their problem; it's management's. People might, I suppose, be angry if Chris just said no more smoke breaks. But I think many would accept it."

There is evidence elsewhere that the majority of the workforce had not altered their definitions since that point before the scheme got under way when the consultants and I spent quite some time exploring their discourse in relation to the company, their supervisors, and work practices and relationships. They spoke then of the inability to get anything done; how they had tried to get progress on issues but how they had been constantly blocked and frustrated and had in the end given up. Even after several meetings nothing had encouraged them to deviate from that mode of discourse.

Op: "We haven't really brought any issues forward because we are fed up - in the past they never got anywhere."

They had not come to characterise the situation as being in anyway new. Management's rhetoric had featured participation as a 'new way of doing things' etc., the shop-floor had not learnt to consider it in that way. Participation was defined as another of management's 'games'; it was their concern, it belonged to them. It did not really introduce anything new into management-shop-floor relations. Any changes were the province of management, they could change if they wanted, perhaps they should; but there is no obligation on the shop-floor to alter. Participation had merely become another factor in the management-workforce interface, it did not radically alter the nature of that interface. It might be possible to say that the majority of the shop-floor had not been exposed to the new language, to the discourse on participation. The reps. and management had come to participate in a new language code, as it were, that provided fresh

ways of talking about work and its problems. Most of the shop-floor had had only limited exposure to that code. Much of what they wished to talk about in relation to work did not, for them, fit readily into it. It was more natural, then, to continue to employ a mode of discourse with which they were familiar; that had covered all eventualities in the past; however ineffectually.

If we look specifically at some of the meanings emerging amongst the reps. over the same period it will be apparent that they had moved on from the kind of discourse that they and their colleagues were engaged in at the beginning, and in which the rest of the workforce were still locked. There are also the dawnings of definitions that begin to move away from those sponsored by management; embryonic interpretations that stand on their own, and as potential counterpoints to those being profferred by management. The reps. begin to position themselves on virgin ground, they have taken some paces away from their colleagues on the shop-floor. They could, and some suggested they would, shift towards management, sharing a common language. But there are some inklings of a middle-ground. The reps. are beginning to occupy their own territory, to work on a language that talks about participation in fresh ways. But remember, these are 'tiny revolutions', I do not want to give the impression of radically different definitions. Indeed, much of the reps. talk remains within the discourse established by management.

From the first meeting the reps. were more positive about the effects of participation. They said that they had begun to notice changes, that things had begun to happen right from the start. They had noticed things that they felt perhaps their members were not picking up. Already after the first couple of meetings they did not share the scepticism and pessimism of their members. And they certainly did

not share in the apathy. The enthusiasm, however, was certainly not total. The reps. were as aware, perhaps more so, as any of the other members of the limitations of the issues handled by the scheme.

The reps., quite naturally, had doubts about their own abilities to handle this new role effectively. They lacked confidence at the main meetings and some even expressed some unease in handling meetings with their own people. All this is understandable. But what often made the situation worse were the conditions under which they had to conduct themselves as representatives. I have already made reference to the debate about the provision of time in which they could hold meetings with their constituents. The difficulties did not end there. Pauline, for instance, was obliged to conduct her meetings with forty-plus women on the machine shop-floor, amongst noisy machinery with no seating, tables or other facilities. It is perhaps not surprising that there was some inefficiency in communications at that point, and this may have contributed to the lack of interest on the part of the membership. These conditions were hardly conducive to an effective representational system.

Despite these drawbacks the reps. responded well to the first couple of meetings; after some teething problems they grew in confidence and became better organised. To their surprise, most found dealing with their own groups - the apathy, the lack of seriousness- more difficult to handle than the main meetings. Some experienced difficulties getting to spend enough time with their members. Most found difficulties in chairing their own meetings and keeping their members to the point. On the whole they reported that they were fairly happy with the way the first few meetings had gone, and none showed a disinclination to carry on.

The group of representatives were in fact far from an homogenous company. There were differences of ability, confidence and

perceptiveness. Peter, for instance, was reflective from the start. It was he who almost immediately drew attention to the passive attitude of management. He suggested that they were too negative; that they were waiting merely to react and were not making a constructive input. He particularly wanted to see line management being more communicative and contributing more. He talked of participation in terms of a collaborative exercise where all parties made a 'positive' and 'constructive' contribution. He anticipated that senior management would begin responding by bringing their own issues to the meeting, but was concerned that Cyril and John should get more involved. He suggested that they were being far too cautious and too aware of the presence of their own superiors. He was of the opinion that, although the early meetings had gone well, they had not really tackled anything of great importance. Aware of the scepticism of his members, he was eager that the scheme should very soon show that it could produce results. Much of Peter's talk echoes familiar discourse that had been circulating at Tridy for some time. Participation should be a positive coming together, a constructive sharing and common ownership of issues. He spoke of the need to get away from a 'them-and-us' situation. He was not concerned with confrontation and wanted management to approach the scheme positively and not merely wait to respond to shop-floor gripes.

Other reps. were less analytic. Most said they were rather pleasantly surprised by the behaviour of management at the meetings, especially line management. It is clear they were expecting more aggression and assertiveness. They found Cyril, for example, 'more friendly' and the others amenable. They had expected a more confrontational 'tub thumping' style, with line management reps. acting in the same fashion as they did on the shop-floor. Amy, the quietest member of the group, said she thought the scheme was going well and was a

good idea since now "at least you can say your piece and know that someone is listening - it doesn't just get blocked." She was quite happy to see participation as a simple forum for the workforce to air their views and express their grievances. The kind of meeting where a rep. raised an issue about, say, poor lighting, which management listened to and did something about, appeared sufficient to satisfy her expectations about participation. The other reps. could be located somewhere between this attitude and the definition proposed by Peter, although most would be nearer to Amy than to Peter.

It is fairly clear at this stage that management had been successful in having their proposed definitions to a large degree accepted and accredited by the reps. Neither the reps. nor their members radically questioned the nature of the scheme being put forward. At most it was rejected as unlikely to make any difference and as a mere 'game' on the part of management that would not significantly alter existing relationships and procedures. And indeed the reps. were more positive about the scheme than their members. That is hardly surprising; it would be peculiar if they had allowed themselves to be elected and attended meetings only to say that they didn't believe in what they were doing and that the whole thing was a waste of time. But barely any voices were raised with alternative definitions or radically different perceptions of what participation might mean. Even people like Peter did not recast things in ways that deviated significantly from what had already been suggested. Peter was perhaps slightly unusual in that he took management at their word and insisted that they act out their own rhetoric. Indeed on occasions the talk perfectly matched that talk about participation engaged in by the consultants and members of the executive, almost as if they were repeating a script. For instance, Pauline reiterated to her group when they questioned the progress of issues that "things will

take time and that you can't expect changes overnight." And in Peter's group discussing things that might affect variances:

> Op: "The company will simply deny that it happens."
>
> Op: "They'll just say 'rubbish'."
>
> Peter: "Well, let's put it to them - they can't just say 'rubbish' now. Let's get the explanation - the reasons."

The reps., in the absence of a developed discourse of their own with which to debate issues relating to participation, had readily co-opted the ready provided discourse made available by management and the consultants. It provided a means of representing things in a 'participatorial' way, it provided a frame that recycled conversation into this newer way of speaking, a frame that served up suitable justifications and excuses. What we begin to see is some of the reps. developing a discourse that is more nearly their own, that doesn't absolutely trace over that already provided, and in some areas, begins to take on a counter-definitional hue.

The intertextual nature of reps. developing discourse reveals a complexity, exposed as they are to the exchanges with both their members and members of management associated with participation and the consultants. They have obligations in both directions (as well as to themselves) and to some extent their position is characterised by a requirement to switch codes, as it were, as they travel from one linguistic territory to another. The pressurising encounters with their members enters their talk in growing expressions of dissatisfaction with the progress of the issues and the way they are handled by management. But they also begin to develop a language to talk about participation that is different from their constituents. This language has features of a tracking away from the 'moaning and groaning' script of their members and hurries in a more proactive approach.

They began to question the progress of issues. A backlog of issues raised and not attended to had built up. Even issues discussed had not progressed satisfactorily. This, in part, refers to issues like unpaid leave that management had placed on a carousel, where it continued to go round, not going anywhere. Issues that were deliberately, or otherwise, lost; that had been well discussed but had not been adequately resolved. Other issues were 'intangible' and although they had been usefully debated, the reps. had nothing concrete to display to their members. There were other concerns too, about the procedure of the scheme and the part played by the management reps. The reps. began to question the continued passitivity of management; the sense of that pattern in which the shop-floor presented issues and management responded; the quality of the answers given; the right of management to control information, particularly the agenda; and the right of management to decide when and how to terminate issues. Some extracts of conversations with Peter and the other reps. will help to exhibit this developing counteracting discourse.

I asked Peter for his general reactions to the scheme so far:

Peter: "Well, if you're asking what do people think about it, then I guess the representatives generally think it is going O.K. - but the rest think that nothing's going on. They don't see anything happening.
The issues seem to drag on for months, and some never even get looked at. I think the group needs to be more decisive; more aggressive in what it does. It needs to actually make decisions on things.
An issue should come up - it should be discussed, and then some decision made on it.
We need a few issues where we can actually get something done - to show our members that something is happening."

R.I.W.: "Are there any things to do with the procedure of the thing that might improve things; like the agenda, say?"

Peter: "Yes definitely. We don't understand how the agenda gets put together. We would like to be able to see it about a week before the meeting. It's no good an issue being raised and then I have to keep saying 'Oh that's being dealt with at the next meeting'; I mean, we've got a few things done like the banking and payment of wages on Thursday, but as my people point out, things like that were on the cards anyway. To be honest, it's no good me going to them and saying, 'Oh we had a useful discussion about such and such'."

.....

Peter: "An issue shouldn't take more than three meetings - one to raise the issue and then to all go away and consider it and make necessary investigations - then a second to discuss it and perhaps to get someone either to make a report or to make enquiries - and then a third to consider the report or whatever and then make the decision."

R.I.W.: "Or a decision to take some action at least."

Peter: "Yes. It's hard to simply report a discussion with no action and no firm decision. They aren't interested."

R.I.W.: "Yes, but I think perhaps there is a case for perhaps pushing home more firmly than we have been just what has been achieved. I was chatting to some people on the floor last week and their first reaction was 'well nothing's been done, nothing's happened'; but when I started to mention a couple of things, they do say 'Well .. oh yeah I suppose so'. Perhaps we ought to really impress on them what's been happening."

Peter: "But there really isn't that much - you tell me some of the things we've done."

R.I.W.: (Flustered) "Well ... right now you mean? (laugh nervously).

Peter: "Yes, well that's exactly what happens to me. They moan that nothing has happened. I say there has, then they catch me on the hop saying 'Well, go on then, just what?'. It's not easy - I may remember a few things, say banking or heating but then while I hesitate they say, 'Yeah, we'll give you a few things like that, but banking was on its way anyhow - but what really have we done'."

R.I.W.: "Yes that's exactly what you did to me (laughs). But I think if we had time we could make a reasonable case."

Peter: "I'm not so sure yet."

.....

Peter: "Too often we look at a problem initially; then we say let's get that looked into and that's it, that's the last we hear about it.
There are no definite goals; we've got to make clearer decisions."

.....

Pauline: "It seems that things are being raised but then not getting through them. The girls keep bringing things up and then when they ask me about them, I have to say, 'Oh well that's coming up next time', they get fed up. Sometimes I don't even have a chance to say things at the meeting - I haven't sometimes been able to even bring an issue up."

Pauline reveals some subtle changes in relations between line management and shop-floor, indicating, that at least amongst the reps. there was a greater tolerance; perhaps an improved understanding of the position of supervision. Perhaps also, seeing them in a different setting demythologised them, they were seen as normal people with understandable failings and not as omnipotent 'ogres'.

Pauline: "He's quite a nice person really (John) but he doesn't seem to know how to do his job. He will come up to you and asks you to move to another band or do something, but if you say (flutters eyelashes) 'Oh John, I don't really want to'; if you're a bit nice to him, then he says 'Oh all right then', and you don't have to do it. It's wrong really, he should be able to make decisions. He's funny, the other day he asked for two volunteers; nobody did. I felt a bit sorry for him so I did, but he didn't use me. He got hold of some of the girls who hadn't already disappeared.
Cyril .. well he's OK. He's quite fair.
Chris's still the same - he does, like at the meeting, discuss things. But he's a funny bloke - he still never says 'good morning' even when you walk straight past him."

Pauline, like the others queried the control of the agenda and felt it to be unsatisfactory that she didn't get to see it some time prior to the meeting. Others also questioned the minutes, some questioning their accuracy but more concerned that the language should be more carefully constructed, being more heedful of its intended audience. It was suggested that the minutes should state the answers given in

response to issues and that they should make clear what action was being undertaken. Attention was drawn to the problem of issues being "passed over too quickly", reference being made to the unpaid leave issue. Iris, for instance, complained about the quality of answers given and how her members were 'browned off' with the way issues were raised and not treated properly. Betty and Anne both suggested that management had too much control over issues and the running of the meeting. Issues discussed at one meeting were not picked up on at the next. Certain people monopolised the meetings. Too much went managements way.

What is emerging in general terms is a challenging of management's right and ability to control the meetings and the issues raised. There was a growing perception of the disadvantages of not being aware of the agenda, of having no control over how they are produced and distributed. Similarly with the minutes. The language of the minutes tended to be the language of management. It was often confusing, or glossed over issues. There was concern over the approach of the management members. People were no longer content to merely be given evasive answers. They wanted concrete commitment to action, not vagaries.

Pressure from their members led to a demand for more active responses, for issues to be seen all the way through to a satisfactory solution. On the other hand, they did not want issues to drag on for too long without progress. There was also a growing urgency that some more substantial issues should be tackled and effectively dealt with. Members had seen through the ploy of dealing with issues that had already been in the pipeline prior to participation and then presenting them as if they were a participation success story. They also were waiting for management to take a more active part instead of merely responding to items derived from the shop-floor. Participation should

effect a greater mutuality than had been demonstrated so far.

From Peter and some of the others one gleans a curious protectionism in relation to the scheme. There was an expression of the need to demonstrate results to their members, that would be recognised as such by them. The reps. were keen to keep the scheme alive. They had a sense of personal involvement now and a failure of the scheme would reflect on them. Their member's scepticism would be vindicated and the reps. would be faced with an unpleasant 'I told you so - why did you waste your time'. In a sense the scheme had become their scheme to be defended and properly presented to their members.

Participation was being defined in a more business-like manner. It no longer had strong meaning as a 'discussion' mechanism or as a forum for the 'exchange of information'. It was defined now in terms of concrete decisions and actions. It was no longer seen as a debating chamber but as a legislative and executive body to some degree; not a House of Lords but a House of Commons. Real issues should be discussed, decisions made and action taken; and seen to be taken.

But note too,traces of the traditional discourse still very apparent; Pauline says that John 'should be able to make decisions'; and Christie was still able to say 'Nobody in management can make a decision'. The fundamental prerogatives of management are not being challenged in total, but there is a questioning of the adequacy of their answers and of their competence and right to control certain things.

There is the beginnings of a movement that edges towards confronting some of the basic power issues behind arrangements at Tridy. In the type of issues, but perhaps more incisively, in procedural questions, the reps. are becoming more assertive, more proactive. They are beginning to move towards a position that challenges preordained privileges and rights of management. They are no longer satisfied to accept without question management taking possession

and responsibility for issues, nor with being cast in the role of docile recipients of the received wisdom of a paternal management. They want more control over what they discuss and how it is discussed. They want more control over the issues and their progression. They want a positive approach with decisions and actions, a commitment to get things done that is shared by management. Part of this embryonic initiative, proactive approach of the shop-floor was an increased group identity and a desire to meet as a group informally to compare notes and prepare for the main meeting. Perhaps a recognition that they could be more effective, especially if a confrontational mode was being entered, if they presented a united front; if they showed some solidarity. Certainly they had encountered throughout an unshakeable solidarity from the senior management members presentation; although as indicated earlier there was a split between line and senior management. Indeed over one issue some of the representatives from the shop-floor formed a kind of quango with line management reps. to consider some of the details.

CHAPTER 3

INTERLUDE : REVIEW MEETING

After a number of meetings it was decided to hold a session at which progress to date could be reviewed, points of procedure could be discussed and any changes deemed necessary could be implemented. Many of the points discussed in the last section were fed directly into this meeting. The reps. were able to give public and formal expression to the problems they had outlined to me privately.

Agenda : Agenda

> 'Agenda for pharmaceutical packaging working party to be held on Monday, 12th June, at 9 a.m. in conference room (A/I/3) No. I floor, 'A' Block.'
>
> "The meeting will be completely devoted to a review of the Group activities to date."

The above meeting was begun by a summary, provided by Hamming, of the issues identified by the shop-floor reps. that they felt required consideration. After making the opening comment that 'generally people are reasonably happy', Hamming ran through the following list before discussion on individual items got under way:

1. Agenda - too late.
2. Agenda - who devises?
3. Minutes - generally O.K. But - some problems with the language
   - some problems with distribution
   - they can have an inhibiting effect.
4. Questions about how the meetings are actually run.
   a. some people contribute more than others.
   b. possibly needs more control - the role of the chairman
   c. the type of issues brought to the meetings e.g.

production variances - is it a real issue? Is it the place for lecturing-type presentations?

d. The quality of discussions and answers, e.g. unpaid leave. Also the cut-off problem. Some issues passed over quite quickly. General problem of the lack of time.

e. Action - often too slow. More aggressive and decisive. A procedure like: Identify issue - who's going to deal with it and when - follow-up action.

f. Need for summary at the end of meeting.

5. What does this group do - does the group get more involved, more constructively? Should it actually be presenting firm proposals of its own?

6. Pre-meetings - mostly happy. Some problems of where they are held. Problems of ensuring the canvassing of all opinions. Contributions from management too.

7. The actual structure of the group - have we got it right?

Hamming also identified some other general problems that he attributed to the shop-floor generally:

1. Not much happening.
2. Introduced to forestall unions.
3. Some issues are creating problems amongst the girls.

Some of these were undoubtedly sensitive, particularly since they reflected upon the work of the personnel department and Macheath in particular, and upon Kerrick in his role as chairman. But they went beyond personal aspersions, and beyond a call for cosmetic surgery to tidy up procedure. Hamming was doubtless aware of this in presenting the issues in the way he did.

After some preliminaries, Iris dropped a bit of a bomb shell:

Iris: "I should like to bring up the point about unpaid leave - that's what people keep going on about - we still haven't got anything specific."

Kerrick ran for cover immediately and suggested that this review meeting was not the place to discuss the issue. Once again, he was trying to shut the thing off. Hamming slyly suggested that some of

the procedural issues might be tackled by considering a specific issue like that. Cyril piped in with : "That's an example of where this group of fifteen can act constructively." However that bit of 'sport' was not pursued and the discussion turned to the question of the agenda. But had the spectre been laid to rest finally?

Agenda; Control of.

The first point of contention concerned the way items got on the agenda. A number of people mentioned that issues were being raised but not discussed and the dissatisfaction this gave rise to. This led onto the question of how and who designed the agenda; and why wasn't it distributed earlier? It was agreed the agenda should be given out earlier and made clearer. It was also suggested that those reps. who had raised the issue should be identified on the agenda, for as Peter said, 'it's the only way we can prove to our members we've raised the issue.'

It was Kerrick, as justification, that mentioned that he had a large backlog of issues. The reps. complained that issues had got lost, and were not being dealt with.

Cyril: "You, Mr. Kerrick have a long list, a backlog of issues, but we haven't - we need to keep check."

Peter: "Some people are starting to think that issues are being swept under the carpet, or deliberately lost."

Macheath: "Yes, well issues do get lost - some naturally - they do not seem so important after a while."

Macheath is missing the point here to some extent, the question is one of management's control of the issues. However some suggestions were made to expedite issues more efficiently. There was much discussion of various ways of tinkering with the agenda and of handling issues. Cyril seemed to lose patience: "What we really want is the agenda and some way of getting issues on." For some time Cyril had pressed to know what issues were coming up before he actually arrived at the meeting. Originally there was more than a suggestion of self-protection in that aspiration; his intentions at this stage are probably more complex. There is more criticism of the control of the agenda and of the advancement of issues. Kerrick gets defensive:

> Kerrick: "I've got this list of issues from past minutes. Some have been solved, some haven't. I must be frank here - I have a problem - I get people coming to me from outside this division, saying 'look, that group you've got there are privileged, they are in a privileged position. They get to discuss things and make decisions that we don't get a chance to talk about, and some of those things may affect me."

The casting of the group as in a 'privileged position' had been tried before. This speech almost says, 'you should be grateful, other members of the shop-floor have not got what you have got'. For Kerrick, it provides an excuse for certain outcomes by making reference to his wider responsibilities. In so doing this group is put in its place by being reminded that it is not the centre of the company, that it is only a small part of a larger whole and therefore should not get carried away with a sense of its own importance. It also makes a sideways reference to the problem of site-wide issues that impinge on other departments where there is no participation yet. This point turns up a little later.

It is a little surprising that Kerrick's outburst did not generate some heated response. However the reps. seemed to choose to let it lie and moved on to something else. Christie, reflecting the increasingly proactive attitude of the shop-floor, made the suggestion that the reps. should meet as a body, or rather, all shop-floor reps. It was put forward as a means of smoothing the running of the main meeting; the reps. could meet to see if they have any duplication of issues. But the response of others showed that they see potential for more than that; for mutual preparation of a case, for a sense of solidarity. The consultants encouraged them in this move. Management appeared to get a little nervous.

Interlude (2) : A Touch of Burlesque

Hamming begins to summarise certain points. Macheath jumps up, moves to the blackboard - "Is it worth my writing on the board." (Begins going over the points again).

Hamming: "While Macs. doing that .. can we proceed (impatiently). Let's have a look at the minutes issue."

(Silence)

Kerrick: (As Macheath scurries back to his seat - heads are turning in all directions.) "I'm a bit lost."

(Macheath sits down again.)

Hamming: "So am I." (Looks toward Macheath) "I thought you were going to write that down."

Macheath: "Uhhm ... Yes ... but I ... I think we ought to go through it together."

(Macheath gets up, returns to blackboard and begins writing again.)

Who's Not Being Frank?

Hamming moved the meeting on to the question of the minutes. After some clarifying points concerning their distribution and wording, Chris owned up to including the issue of the possible inhibiting effects of the minutes.

Chris: "Yes, I raised that. I'm not too sure what I mean - but I thought it was worth raising. It occurred to me that people might be able to say 'ah so-and-so said that', and it might prove inhibiting. Particularly with the minutes being so widely distributed. It's only a small point - if everyone else is happy .. I'm not too worried."

Kerrick: "There hasn't been too much inhibition at the meetings, I wouldn't say."

Chris: "I just felt at times that people were pussy-footing. I mean I don't always think that John is saying things that are on his mind."

Macheath: "Are you inhibited, John?"

John: "No."

Pauline: "No, we don't seem to argue very much .. to get het-up"(said with degree of surprise, as if to say 'why don't we').

Hamming: "Do you think you should, Pauline?"

Pauline: "Well, I don't .. that smoke-break thing, I did get angry then."

Hamming: "Yes, I think that's an important thing, people have held back, have bitten their tongues. Yes, important observation that, Chris. Perhaps people have't been as forthright as they might have been. It's important that we get an atmosphere in which people have no fear of 'black-eyes', where we can have a good open discussion."

There are similarities here between the point made by Chris, and the more general feeling amongst some of the shop-floor that nothing vital had been tackled yet, that things had not really got down to the nitty-gritty. There is almost an expectation that if 'real' issues are taken on then there would inevitably be some rancour, some confrontation. There is a drift away from those earlier mana-

gerial definitions that participation should be characterised by politeness, by an absence of personal attack and confrontation. The consultants are aware that the scheme is in danger of stagnating by virtue of this caution, and that perhaps the time has come to begin to tackle the more uncomfortable issues. It should be remembered that the consultants, like all other members, were as susceptible to the emergence of fresh definitions. Although their own stance was perhaps a little more stable than the rest, they, too, were open to an interactional mix where meanings moved, where new relationships developed and others died away.

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The discussion returned to the progressing of issues and the fact that progress was often painfully slow. Some even suggested that it might be necessary to increase the frequency of the meetings. Peter made his process point about issues taking only three meetings. Others made reference to the disgruntlement of their members; Iris: "The girls keep saying to me 'waste of time, waste of time - nothing's been done'." Then reference was made to the dreaded unpaid leave issue. Macheath showed his exasperation.

Macheath: "The interesting thing is that people won't accept that some things just can't be settled in a clear cut way."

Betty: "But there are problems, people see others getting unpaid leave and they are turned down; they aren't sure why."

Macheath: (firmly) "Well, the situation is quite clear. You've got to go to supervision first. Each individual case is decided on its merits. I know that each person thinks he has got a real case .. but the reality is that sometimes people will get a no."

Hamming: "The point is that people still aren't clear what the criteria are."

Macheath: "Yes, but you know as well as I do that you can't always specify these types of things."

Hamming: "There is a tendency to just try and give an answer to a problem, but we are not really getting the feelings of the group."

Cyril: "That's part of my point - it's important that this fifteen as a group should put proposals forward."

Anne: "Yes. We want to get specific rules - they want an answer."

Hamming: "The point Cyril and others are making is that we want to avoid a question and answer situation. It's important to use this group to actually sit down and discuss without necessarily looking for answers. To discuss, to get the issue clear and then to seek out proposals from the girls."

Cyril: "Yes, we can talk and discuss and then put proposals to management."

Peter: "We haven't gone on that tack before. In the past we have brought our issues and passed them on to management."

Kirknatch: "I think we all agree that's what we want to start doing. At meetings if you feel that's what is needed, you should say so."

Kerrick: "Hang on a minute, let me have my two-penny worth. Some of these issues have site-wide implications. It's not that simple. Things we do have implications beyond the department."

Peter: "But if we make a decision here, who is it that can say 'no'? Some of my members have the feeling that the way things are going, that ultimately management will do what they like. It then makes this group a waste of time - if we, as a group, make a decision and then it's changed."

Cyril: "We can cross that bridge when we come to it. Let's do our work first. We should get our own proposals sorted out .. if we do it properly then we can sell it to other people."

Chris: "And if we can't, we should at least come to know why."

Kerrick: "Look, I've had a lot of flak from outside; about being paid on Thursdays instead of Fridays (a change introduced as a result of participation).

"From other departments - not because they are being paid on Thursdays as such, but because they weren't asked."

Arthur: "Appreciate that .. but then perhaps we can only wait until it's site-wide."

Macheath: "Look, let's not get carried away. Clearly there are some issues that are unapproachable, because they are site-wide for instance. Other issues are specific to this area; others are in a kind of grey area. We can discuss things .. but must be aware of these things."

Peter: "My men think some issues are being blocked, they would like to know exactly who is blocking, who is saying 'NO'."

Kerrick: "I'm not sure I know what you mean?" (flustered).

Macheath: "Can you give a clear example?"

Peter: "Well .. I'm not sure .. There's .. the feeling is that the issues actually tackled are really nothing."

Kerrick: "Well, no, there have been achievements." (Gives some examples).

Peter: "Take the issue of taking a half hour lunch break and then leaving earlier on Friday. The issue was raised, people were very interested in that but it never saw the light of day. There is a feeling that issues are swept under the carpet; that the burning issues are left alone."

Chris asks if there are similar feelings being expressed in the other groups, are things really that bad. Most of the other reps. agree with Peter's assessment, although there are some dissenting voices.

Chris: "Well, I think Peter has come cleaner than I have heard for ages, I wanted to see if the others would."

Kirknatch: "Are we also saying, asking, 'are there any limits to what can be raised at this meeting. Can Peter bring site-wide issues?"

Peter: "Most of the important issues do have wider implications."

Kirknatch: "I think there is no shut-off though. We are at liberty to raise issues .. any."

Peter: "But we can't tackle them" (derisive snort).

Kirknatch: "No, hang on. The first thing is to identify an issue - then we can have a quality dialogue, and then, as Cyril suggested, perhaps we can work out proposals that we can sell".

The issue is allowed to die away after this with some side tracking by the consultants. Peter, perhaps cautious that he had already said enough and not really getting support from the other reps., allows the thing to drop. Much of the exchange speaks for itself loud and clear and does not require commentary from me. It encapsulates the shifts in definition that had been emerging over the preceding weeks. The reps., including some of line management,are searching towards a re-definition of participation that gives them more control, and involves them taking part in making decisions and in tackling those issues that they see as fundamental. The problem is that those issues have wide implications, they are issues that are traditionally the preserve of management. The redefinition is heading towards a counter-definition. It starts to shunt those associations of information-sharing, communication, discussion, to the back. It will no longer easily accept the paternalism whereby a passive workforce bring issues to a benevolent management for them to go away and do something, or to say that they can't.

The consultants even did not seem entirely in tune with this new language. They encouraged Peter to make his case, but like Macheath wanted to bring things back to earth. They were perhaps aware that management were getting uneasy and did not want things to go too far too soon. Peter's radical suggestions are tempered by the consultants referring back to the old discourse in which 'quality dialogues' are prized. There is an attempt to bring the meanings back to that cluster that includes debate, rational dis-

cussion, non-confrontational dialogue.

Cyril surprised a number of people by his positive contributions and the degree to which he was prepared to distance himself from his superiors and align himself with the cause of the workforce. It was he, note, who introduced the interesting strategy of the reps. working out, as a group, their own solutions and then presenting them to management. His view is that if they prepare a good enough case, with facts and good arguments they can present it to management as a fait accomplis. Management can only refuse then by revealing their autocracy and stubborness. If the case is good and through its visibility everyone else can see that, then management would put themselves in an awkward position by turning it down. Cyril displayed a willingness to be accommodating to his shop-floor reps. and to take a stance that for a member of management, albeit at the lower echelons, was heretical. Some of the reps. were not entirely convinced of his sincerity. Indeed one reiterated the old fears that some of the reps. still felt in relation to Cyril.

What IS an Issue Anyway? Production Variances

On the agenda was a question concerning the type of issues brought up. The dialogue went something like this:

Christie: "At a recent meeting the question of variances was raised, I didn't see why that had to be brought up, it's of more concern at the supervisory level - it's not really for the girls. It made the meeting go on too long."

Kerrick: "Well, that was me - I wanted to a) provide some important information and b) there was a lot of discussion and work going on I wanted to ensure that people got the correct story."

Macheath: "Yes, I thought the message was one of reassurance. Things had changed but they were not as bad as it looked."

Cyril: "I would like this group to help here. The supervisors get blamed for just trying to get production out; but it's important that we all get involved, that we will get to know about costs etc. We are all working towards the same end."

Pauline: "I thought it was a good thing for the girls to know."

Christie: "I thought there were more important things to talk about."

Chris: "But people are working in isolation, it is helpful to know where your little figures go into the overall scheme of things, to know what affects what."

Christie: "Yes Chris. I don't want to be disrespectful but you do tend to just talk about money - how much things cost. I appreciate your problems but the girls just think 'Oh he's off again'."

The point is taken graciously, Christie's hesitancy about saying such a thing was not born out. Personal criticisms are now possible in participation. It was unfortunate, since variances were about the first issue that management had raised. The criticism was perhaps more one of style. The issue was just sprung on the reps., they had no prior warning. It was also presented in a formal and traditional lecturing style. After the above discussion the right of the existence of the issue was mostly agreed,but perhaps management had been put off raising something similar in the future.

The Spectre Won't Fade : Unpaid Leave Part 107

Towards the end of the meeting, Hamming reintroduced unpaid leave - just to remind management that it was still there?

The reps. are sent away to canvas the views of their members, to get clear views.

Kirknatch: "There is a need for supervision to come back with an idea of the criteria they use."

Cyril: "No, no, Howard. It goes through personnel now."

Kirknatch: "O.K. personnel."

John: "Under the old system there was none of this. It was left up to your Cyrils .. they lay down the law .. they could say yes or no, it was as simple as that. People knew where they stood."

"No"

"Ah yes but ..."

"Don't you see, John ...."

(Hubbub. Dolly back. Fade to black.)

CHAPTER 4

DEFINITIONS IN ACTION

I intend tracking two other issues raised by the shop-floor reps. that came to assume some importance and significance. Both issues entailed detailed and lengthy discussion. Neither was a simple 'hygiene' issue. It must be said that to that extent they were not typical. Most issues were related to relatively simple grievances concerning working conditions or routine matters of procedure. But, as indicated, there was an increasing trend towards the consideration of, what might be termed, more substantial issues. Furthermore it is these issues that reflect the emergent qualities of meanings developing amongst the representatives and others involved. The fact that such issues came forward for discussion is itself an indication of shifting definitions. But, more importantly, the manner in which they were handled and the language in which they are couched, most fruitfully display the definitional process. Earlier analysis dealt more directly with that process; with overt definitional exchanges, here the process is embodied in the machinery of day-to-day organisational practice.

Initially I shall approach the process through a sub-theme. I shall, in a straightforward fashion, present the issues as they were related in formal company minutes. These stand as the official versions of what took place. Minutes and similar documents occupy a singular place in the process. They are a bureaucratic gloss on what were extended and complex interactional activities. They presume to represent the 'facts' in organisationally relevant and warrantable ways. They attempt to achieve required orderliness, rationality and tidiness. Some of these qualities and their implications will be discussed later; but first here is a reproduction of

the presentation of the issues as they appeared in the company

minutes over an extended period of time:

Routine setting-up by operatives

Mon. 8th MAY — "Mr. ... (Peter) suggested that machine operators changed over their respective machines after each run of product. It was agreed that this was a very interesting and constructive idea as it could lead to quicker and more efficient changeovers. It was a system that required further examination and discussion and Mr. Kerrick in summary suggested that a sub-group should be formed with Mr. ... (Chris) as co-ordinator, in order that he could report reactions at a subsequent meeting."

Mon.17th JULY — "OPERATORS/SETTING UP (REPORT FROM SUB-GROUP)
Mr. ... (Chris) identified the questions considered by the sub-group:-

1. What is the scope?
2. What range, and within this range, what could be achieved?
3. What are the advantages?
4. What are the fringe benefits?

Some employees had expressed interest in setting up their machines, and the sub-group believed certain equipment could be set up by the operators. Mr. Kerrick summarising said it would be advisable to give this matter a trial period and monitor the outcome through the sub-group. It was agreed that by doing this we should be able to make better judgement on whether this was a practical proposition. A query regarding insurance was raised and this would be dealt with by the group. A progress report would be given at the next meeting but one."

Mon.25th SEPT. — "(Chris)reported that there was some merit in investigating this proposal. The sub-group had met and thought an exercise could be introduced on a limited scale with band five being recommended as a suitable starting point. The latter point was not agreed at the meeting of the sub-group. Subsequently there has been a difference of opinion regarding the wisdom in selecting band five and enthusiasm seems to have waned. However, there is still some interest, particularly on the twilight shift, and favourable comments were made relating to activities in Penicillin. Dr. Kirknatch reported that people are naturally apprehensive about change but one way to overcome this would be to give the suggestion a trial and monitor the outcome. Mr. Kerrick requested that the sub-group meet again to consider the proposal in further detail."

Mon. 6th NOV.

"There was a long and detailed discussion on this item with various representatives commenting on the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. Dr. Kirknatch commented that we had not made much progress since the last meeting partly because the total group were discussing details which need to be examined by the sub-group. If we are to make any headway it is important to try and keep an open mind until after the recommendations of the sub-group are considered by the main group and perhaps evaluated on an experimental basis.

Mr. Kerrick asked (Chris) to arrange a further meeting of the sub-group when they could consider the various issues which essentially fall into the following categories:-

A. Objectives - what do we want to achieve?

B. What are the specific problems?

C. What are acceptable solutions?

D. Which areas/groups might be involved in a trial and for what period of time?

E. What activities should we include?

F. What changes might have to be made?

(Chris) would report back at the next meeting."

Mon.11th DEC.

"(Chris) reported that he had a further meeting with the sub-group. The consensus of opinion was that we had been over-enthusiastic. The proposal should now read "that we should consider actively encouraging the girls to assist fitters in the cleaning, fitting and re-assembling of machinery on the packaging floor". We had tried to formalise this issue too soon and too quickly with the result that we had created concerns. There is a good deal of interest in the twilight shift but not in the day shift. (Chris) felt that we should continue exactly as we are at the present moment. Dr. Kirknatch clarifying the position said it was evident we should not continue with the issue in the original proposed forms for the time being but allow some time to elapse so that the position could become clearer. In the interim, however, as there was still interest on the twilight shift, it was agreed that the group should be approached and asked for their present view. (Anne) and (Eileen) were asked to report back at the next meeting to give the up-to-date view of the twilight shift on this matter."

Wed.24th JAN.

"This issue was deferred until the next meeting because the twilight shift were not represented at this meeting."

Wed.28th
FEB. "It was reported that there were 16 twilight shift ladies that were still interested, if, however, it was instigated , they would prefer to have proper training for the task. (Peter) commented that the fitters were still quite happy with the issue being initiated. (Chris) reported that there seemed to be some fertile ground. He agreed to talk to the day supervision, the twilight shift and maintenance staff with a view to achieving something by the next meeting."

Wed. 28th
MAR. "(Chris) reported that a trial had commenced with the twilight group on 19th March. The early indications are that progress is satisfactory. A more detailed review would be given at the next meeting."

3.30 Leave - half-hour lunch

Mon.17th
JULY "Review of Agenda Items Still Not Discussed."

"Half-hour lunch - 3.30 home."

Mon.25th
SEPT. "Questions raised"

"Mr. Kerrick explained that this issue could not be explored at present."

Mon. 6th
NOV. "Mr. Kerrick commented that although this subject could not currently be progressed on a divisional basis we would review the matter at a future meeting."

Mon.11th
DEC. "It appeared that representatives were not entirely happy with the result of this issue. (Cyril) asked the question why this matter could not be progressed, as he felt that no valid reason had been given.

After considerable discussion Dr. Kirknatch felt that three issues arose:-

1. Can we get general agreement from the group.
2. There is still a strong feeling amongst the group that there is a case for trying the system on a departmental basis rather than a site wide issue.
3. Everybody should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages amongst the group.

He continued by suggesting that each representative should go back to his/her group and obtain their reactions, then we should all meet again and collect management's response and the representatives response, after which we should decide the best course of action."

Wed.24th JAN.

"It was reported that the majority of people were in favour of having half-an-hour lunch break and leaving at 3.30 on Fridays. The representatives considered the Pharmaceutical Services group to be a fairly self-contained unit and felt the proposal might be implemented for a trial period.

In previous meetings Mr. Kerrick had stressed that this topic needs to be considered as a site wide issue and he still held the same view. He asked the representatives to try and put themselves in the position of employees working in other areas. How might they react in such a situation if they were not involved in the experiment? A wide ranging discussion followed of the impact on inter-divisional and inter-departmental relationships.

Mr. Austin undertook to summarise in some detail the various points of view and he would elaborate on these outside the meeting with several of the participants. Mr. Kerrick would use this information to present the pros and cons. to Mr. Sherry's Staff Group."

Wed.28th FEB.

"Mr. Austin reported that following the last meeting he had agreed to undertake a summary of the details and various points of view with several of the participants. He had been through advantages and disadvantages and had presented the outcome to Mr. Kerrick, who, in turn, had presented it to the Staff Group. Following these staff meetings, each director had been asked to do the same exercise. There were still some outstanding problems which needed to be resolved. There were many people involved and therefore a tremendous diversity of opinion. Prof. Hamming who had attended some of the staff meetings did stress that a considerable effort had been put into discussions on this issue and he thought a decision would be reached soon."

Wed.28th MAR.

"Mr. Kerrick reported that following the 24th January meeting Mr. Austin had summarised the pros and cons of this proposal as seen by the Pharmaceutical Packaging Group. After discussion in the Staff Group, each division had been asked to consider the implications on their activities. On assessing the advantages and disadvantages from a site wide point of view, we could not support the proposal at this point in time. Mr. Kerrick identified the reasons which led to this decision:-

I. A change in the proposed hours for one group would create difficulties in other groups both in terms of work arrangements and personal wishes.

   a. A similar request had been made in the past by another group which had not been accepted because they had encountered similar problems. Mr. Kerrick said he was making the point to illus-

trate that decisions cannot be made in isolation when they relate to working arrangements.

b. There are certain groups where it is not practical to operate such a system even though some individuals would like such an arrangement.

c. In certain other groups the majority of our employees are opposed to introducing this proposal.

d. Our experience shows that when individuals/ groups perceive they are being treated unfairly, some dissatisfaction results.

2. Some of our employees require a three-quarter hour lunch period for personal reasons.

3. A shorter lunch break is likely to mean more employees using the canteen. Consequently it may be necessary to further stagger lunch times.

4. Some departments experience problems with the existing arrangements.

5. The proposed arrangement would be less convenient for supervision and day fitters covering twilight on Friday.

6. Administering for a days holiday becomes more difficult.

There was a long discussion with a suggestion that a proposal for the twilight shift to work a four night week be considered as a separate issue. Although not a unanimous decision, the concensus was this idea progressed as an independent topic. The group did express some disappointment at the outcome of the decision in relation to leaving early."

Thurs.10th MAY

(Something of a second review meeting)
"This request had been turned down at the last meeting and there was considerable dissatisfaction with the way it had been handled. Mr. Kerrick attempted to clarify the reasons for rejection; on balance at the time, he explained, the problems of implementing the changes outweighed the advantages. It was accepted that on issues such as this one, great care was needed in clarifying the request that was being made and preparation of the presentation to be made outside the group was essential."

Thurs.14th JUNE

"(Pauline)asked whether Management's decision concerning early closing remained the same. Mr. Austin explained that there was nothing more to add in the short term, although it may be best to bring the issue up once participation had been extended site wide.

"Howard Kirknatch suggested that the issue be raised again in the future."

Thurs.19th JULY "Further comment was made on the proposed change of working hours (3.30 p.m. Friday closure). It was agreed that the matter would be formally raised again after the Divisional Participation Group had been formed, probably in September/ October."

The reader will perhaps be struck first by the inordinate length of time that both of these issues continued to exercise the minds of the committee. That seems even more absurd when one considers how little progress was achieved from one meeting to the next. Too often the same points were reiterated and debated at subsequent meetings with little that was new contributed. The early-finish issue was on the agenda for very nearly a year; it was to resurface again after I had left the company. The comments of the reps. and their members about issues not progressing, about things 'taking too long'; about it being 'too slow' and about 'nothing happening' clearly index the status of these types of issue.

Before moving on to a treatment of the actual exchanges upon which these minuted reports are a gloss, I would like to make some general points about minutes and their production and function.

On Minutes

These minutes are made to represent <u>one</u> interpretation of the events that took place at the committee meetings, just as the story as presented here is but one of a number of possibles. They aspire, though, to the status of adequate, sensible and definitive accounts. For organisational purposes they must present themselves as accurate and objective accounts of events. They should appear, not as mere opinion but as, largely, indisputable fact. They are constructed so as to give an impression, not of being <u>one</u> account among many, but as <u>the</u> account. Other versions may embroider and elaborate, but devia-

tions from the truth.

But, of course, the minutes have to fulfil other organisational purposes. They must, necessarily reduce convoluted conversation to a rarified and printable form. They must translate everyday speech with it's stutters, stammers, colloquialisms, expletives, illogicalities and dysphasia into a neat, ordered, logical and consistent piece of writing. 'Messy' speech is to be converted into organisationally accredited language. What was said must be made to conform to organisational values of clarity, precision, order and good sense. It is cleansed of obvious traces of personal dispute, in keeping with the company culture of the sublimation of emotional outburst and expressions of anger, doubt, fear, etc. at formal meetings; any such aberrations are effaced.

Part of the achievement of a sense of an authentic, 'correct', objective formulation is accomplished by certain intrinsic characteristics of company minutes. Consider, firstly, that minutes are unauthored. That is to say, there is no recognised or acknowledged source of that which is written; there is no author, no name attached to the document. In our written heritage certain types of writing must have an acknowledged authorship; others do not. I need not point out to the reader examples of this, he will already be very familiar. It is worth noting in this context, however, that non-authorship is a characteristic of many formal/official documents. Material put out by governmental bureaucracies are habitually of this type. But then so is most advertising material. The absence of an author certainly goes some way towards fostering an illusion of objectivity. Any evidence of an individual author is removed, thus implying that the document does not contain idiosyncratic opinion and interpretation. The very anonymity of the material gives rise to a sense of impartial and disinterested reportage. The minutes seemingly escape the corrupting

influence of human contact. It is people that distort the truth, that are biased; withdraw that influence and you have protected the purity of the information; the chastity of the fact. Of course, the realisation that official documents are normally of this type, further adds positively to the credibility of minutes. It associates them with that which is weighty and important, and with that which is supposed to be trusted as accurate. It dissociates them from that which is trivial, trite and fanciful. It is differentiated from those other forms of writing that are imaginative, wilful, non-serious, poetical, personal.

Minutes, then, have this sense of righteous independence. They also impart a sense of concrete materiality, of objective fact, whilst at the same time investing their origins with a peculiar immateriality. There is a diminished sense of belonging; the minutes appear, as it were, out of mid-air. They are forceful pretenders after truth by virtue of this uncontaminated, ghostly quality. But, of course, that is not the whole story. They are not totally unattached. There is a presence in them, albeit not openly referenced. Documents of the form taken by minutes, in the contexts of their use, are more often than not taken to have at least a corporate authorship. They belong to 'the company'. The author may, in an individual sense, be absent, but the gap is filled by an amorphous identity; it is the company (or some identifiable portion thereof) that 'writes' the minutes. This must be so else the meanings encased in the texts could not hope to achieve the tightness they do achieve. A corporate identity provides a source for the meanings in the text, something that can serve as a guarantee of their validity, value and truth. These texts require some such source of origin to provide closure on the meanings of the words in them. A source anchors the meanings of words to a point beyond themsleves and their relations of difference. The

source, in this case notionally 'the company', underwrites the meanings of the text; it provides the yardsticks and the counterpoints by which the meanings can be located and verified. At least this is the case in the way minutes are usually and organisationally used and talked about. So although minutes masquerade as independent, objective and soulless versions of the truth, they are, by their very nature, dependent upon and guided by a specific and interested base. The meanings of the minutes are locatable in the relations with normal company discourse. 'The company', and company discourse is a reification that partially hides a group of organisational members and their interactions, and control of the formulation and distribution of information.

Minutes and other company documents have all the appearance of official documents and all that is associated with that. They are there in black and white; concrete evidence of the existence and presence of a corporate identity, a company view, if not a manifestation of the power elite. The company (if I may continue to use that reification) of course, owns the minutes. They have control, in the most obvious way, of the means of production and distribution of these important sources of information and opinion. Given the obscurity of the author one may pertinently ask, who exactly is responsible for their construction; who is involved in the editing process; who controls the timing and extent of their distribution? The process begins with a secretary taking the original notes of the meetings in shorthand. I would speculate that some revealing research could be conducted into that most overlooked of roles. It is perhaps not desperately significant that the secretary that attended most of the meetings of the Packaging Group, was the personal secretary of the managing director. As far as I could determine, the minutes were put

together by the personnel department, and in particular by Macheath. To what extent other members of the senior management were consulted and/or collaborated with is not clear. I was aware that on some occasions the consultants, at least, had some input. Control of the minutes, like the agenda, did become an issue for the reps. as they came to realise the importance of this sort of informational control and the rhetorical impact of information in that sort of format.

Another feature of these minutes that is apparent here, and even more so in comparison with my own recordings of the events, is the extent to which management contributions feature. The coverage given to management, particularly those senior members such as Kerrick, are disproportionate. It is probably the case that management reps. had the lion's share of the floor time actually at the meetings, but not to the extent implied by these minutes. In a quite blatant way the views of management are being given more space. This can hardly come as a surprise given the preceding demonstration that minutes are perforce authored by 'the company'. The company view must be in the ascendency.

The effect is combinatorial. Managers views are represented in the form of minutes. They are given the weight of accurate, objective reportage as a result. By being encased in that form they shed some of their individualism; they become less personal opinion, more straight fact. The words of the individuals now have the weight of official documentation behind them. Furthermore, they are company documents, and hence the words in them are bolstered and sanctioned by company authority. What is contained in the minutes is checkable only by reference back to other forms and contents of company discourse. That is, it is recycled back to those dominions of discourse that the individuals here reported habitually inhabit.

This is obviously a part of the editing process. Management contributions are foregrounded and those of the shop-floor reps. backgrounded. It is a further feature of management control over important aspects of the dissemination of information, and perhaps, more importantly, over the signifying process.

Doing 'Set-Ups'

The issue of the female operatives doing their own machine 'set-ups' was in fact first raised by the department maintenance fitters well before the first full participation meeting. It then seemed to get lost for some time until raised again by the engineers at one of their pre-meetings. The engineers felt that it would be quite a good idea but suspected that the operatives might not all be agreeable. They felt that the operatives were certainly capable of doing some of the more simple setting-up operations; indeed they had already done so in the past. It was suggested that it would give the women some greater interest and involvement.

The issue was on the agenda of the next meeting on the eighth of May. It was Peter who introduced the topic explaining that it referred to set-ups rather than maintenance, and that his group were interested to test out the idea to see if there was any agreement. He outlined a case, presenting a list of possible consequences. He firstly made the point that there were really insufficient fitters for the area, and that the likelihood of increasing manpower was slight. Having the girls do some of their own change-overs would ease the burden on the fitters. Secondly, it would make the change-overs quicker and more efficient. And thirdly, it would give the chargehands more control over the situation; they could time the changeover more accurately and make it fit in more smoothly with the routines of the day.

This issue was one of the first positive issues to come from the shop-floor. It was not in the same mould as the more typical 'moaning-groaning', conditions issue. That it came from Peter is no surprise, since it concurs with some of the definitions his talk had revealed from the outset. The issue is of further interest already at this point since Peter had taken the trouble to prepare the issue and had some kind of case to put forward. The reps. had not assumed such an active posture in the early stages. Issues previously were presented in a simple manner to management. The onus was on management to prepare a case of justification or explanation. Note too that the minutes do not credit Peter with this positive and detailed contribution.

As part of his case Peter pointed out that the women had, in the past, undertaken the changeover of one of the machines. This fact was disputed by Cyril, to which Peter replied revealingly that, 'I've done some homework, Cyril'. Cyril, in fact took up the point that the real problem was the manning levels in relation to the maintenance staff.

> Cyril: "You're missing the point. If engineering can't get the changeovers done quickly enough now, what chance have unskilled girls got."
>
> Peter: "I think you are underestimating the girls."

Peter's comment here underscores that part of earlier discourse where participation was associated with an opportunity to exploit untapped resources in the organisation; part of the definitional mix put forward by Macheath for instance. It is also part of the intertext where participation is said to mean a development of expansion of work roles; job enrichment etc. As such it would be reckoned to hit a chord with the definitions proposed in the managerial rhetoric.

The proposal received support, in principle from other shop-floor reps. and from Chris. But as Pauline pointed out "I did ask my girls; they didn't seem very keen - but you get lazy though." Cyril was more sceptical suggesting that in some cases it would prove too difficult. The response from the reps. was quite firm:

Christie: "It's as easy as ABC."

Pauline: "People aren't stupid."

Cyril: "It takes a skilled man an hour to do ... (refers to the process on one machine)."

Peter: "You're under a misunderstanding there Cyril; you're looking at your changeover figures, that doesn't reflect the actual time the fitter works on the machine."

The reps. are openly challenging line management's ability and prerogative to claim exclusive knowledge of work processes.

The relationship between the machine operators and the fitters was already a source of some strain, perhaps not surprisingly given the nature of the interface. There was, then, some suspicion of the motives of the fitters; especially since the proposed change could be conceived as simply easing the pressure on the fitters.

Betty: "Why the change of heart Peter? Normally the fitters have said 'don't touch that'."

Peter: "Not by me .. but it has been said I know. But equally production have said 'that's not your business' and so on. That's just the sort of thing we want to get away from, and that's the sort of thing that participation should be dealing with."

Peter is offering a clear partial definition of participation here. Again, it echoes some of the meanings presented by the management. It is that version that associates participation with a diminuation of 'them-and-us' attitudes. It reiterates the 'we are all in this together' stance, and the view that participation requires a coming-together, a combined constructive approach to common problems of

working procedure. Improved efficiency is seen as of benefit to all.

Kirknatch recognises the significance of Peter's contribution, that it is a shift from previous ways of approaching things. He is supportive but recognises that the group of representatives may be in 'advance' of their colleagues on the shop-floor. He makes a processual intervention:

> Kirknatch:"This group has identified a problem perhaps more clearly than anyone else. It may be important for you lot to work it out and then maybe go back and sell it to the girls. That's what participation is all about."

Kirknatch introduces a new element here that was to develop over the next few months. I have already hinted and illustrated the beginnings of a split between the reps. and the rest of their colleagues. I have tentatively suggested some of the reasons - in terms of the co-optation of certain language codes by one party that is not shared by the other. Here that division is being legitimised and normalised by the consultants. It is something to be expected, it is part of the role of representation and should be positively exploited. The representatives are in a unique position and should recognise that fact and come to act accordingly. They must become proactive vis-a-vis their membership. Participation seems to edge towards the creation of new relationship of leader and follower here. The reps. are being positioned as new mandarins of the shop-floor. They are responsible for formulating ideas (policies?) which they must carry to an apathetic ('lazy'?) workforce. They are marketers of products devised by a ('privileged') group, in camera. There is a growing sense of the need for the group to take a more proactive orientation, to develop from the more passive position they had adopted or been allocated in the early stages. Their own self-awareness led to that recognition, but the affirmation of the consultants and their increasing encouragement

certainly played a part. The sense of a group identity grew as the need for a more positive, active determination came to the fore.

After some internicine bickering, in which John criticised the fitters, and Cyril pressed his point about manning levels, Kerrick suggested that the idea was a worthy one and that a sub-committee should be established to explore it in more detail. A committee, he suggested, that should consist of Pauline, Peter, Cyril and Chris. This proposal was agreed upon. The management reps. stated that they thought the idea worth exploring and had open minds about it. I think Peter's approach had rather come as a surprise, used as they were to being ready to respond to grievances and to defending possible attacks. Kirknatch reiterated some old themes about building up a relationship of trust within the group, and reducing the 'them-and-us' syndrome.

Even at this point one begins to see some of the peculiarities of minutes. I have already made reference to the fact that Peter's detailed proposal was not fully reported or accredited to him. The minutes are also laundered of all allusions to dispute. The bickering between different sections of the department are not mentioned. Nor are any of the sceptical or doubting comments. In the minutes it is a manager (Chris) who is made co-ordinator of the sub-group although no mention was made of this at the meeting; although it may have been tacitly assumed.

The minutes attempt to engender a positive attitude to the issue, and indeed those at the meeting had been reasonably supportive of the proposal. The minutes had indexed the company's view by highlighting that the idea was 'constructive' and that it would 'lead to quicker and more efficient changeovers'. The language of efficiency is clearly an integral part of 'company' discourse. The

attitude of the membership was less enthusiastic, as subsequent discussions demonstrated:

R.I.W.: "What about the idea raised by Peter about the girls undertaking their own setting up and stripping down?"

Op: "I don't think it will work."

R.I.W.: "Is that the general view?"

Op: "Well, some want it and some don't."

Op: "It doesn't affect me, we already do our own setting up" (This person is from the labelling section and not part of the main floor.)

"I don't think the company will be prepared to pay the money. If the girls do it there will have to be insurance payments, to cover for possible injuries. I don't think the company will be prepared to pay that. Besides the girls might want extra money for the extra tasks."

R.I.W.: "You have often said to me that the jobs are boring - don't you think that this will add to the interest and involvement in the work?"

Op: "Possibly .. but it's the money that's going to be the issue."

The operatives, I felt, did not consider that the issue was theirs. It had come from somewhere else and was, in a sense, being responded to as if it was a management issue. This may have been a response to the way the issue was presented in the minutes. Peter may have done his homework, but he had not assessed the mood of the shop-floor adequately. The operatives were not acquiescing to that definition that wanted to make 'job enrichment' or task variety as necessarily something desirable in its own right. If the increase in tasks was to be remunerated then it might be acceptable. This type of suggestion was clearly not associated directly with the aims and expectations of participation in any way.

Such a view was confirmed by the representatives. Pauline said that members had come to her privately and expressed more interest

than had been revealed publicly. However, she still felt the figure was considerably less than half. Others again reiterated that there might be more interest if the company were prepared to pay more money. Management had not mentioned money up to this point. The suggestion had been welcomed on the basis of those definitions that participation was about job enlargement and assuming greater responsibilities, that such involvement had intrinsic value and interest; it was a definition that was not shared by the majority of the shop-floor, as became increasingly apparent.

At a pre-meeting of Pauline's group in August the issue was once again put to the membership. There were jokes about "We're all going to have to walk about with a little bag of tools in our hands", but the view had not changed.

Op: "Some want it, others don't. Why don't those who are prepared to do it .. why don't they get paid for it?"

Op: "We already do it in our area anyway."

Pauline: (Addressing whole group) "So you're not really keen to do it?"

('No' was the general response.)

Pauline: "You don't think it would add any more to the interest in your job?"

(Again, a general 'No'.)

Op: "What's interesting about getting oil up to your elbows?"
(Laughter)

The assumption, rooted in much academic literature, that greater task involvement is a perceived, intrinsic value by the workforce here receives a resounding slap in the face. The girls already described their tasks as boring and unchallenging, the addition of another boring and unpleasant task to that was not seen as improving the quality of working life.

The issue was allowed to continue, despite these reservations and negative reactions. Although the issue was redefined in terms of an 'exercise' of 'limited scale', it was not redefined in terms of an increase in workload and responsibility and thus requiring remuneration. Kirknatch tended to define the resistance to the proposal as one of a normal resistance to change in general. He drew parallels with the resistance, or initial lack of enthusiasm for participation. People are not in a position to give a positive response to something they have no experience of. Differences of opinion between the group and its members, and even between members of the group were over-ridden and the proposal was kept alive. The sub-group was invested with the responsibility of further investigation despite the fact that the issue had been on the agenda for five months and no significant positive progress had yet been achieved.

At the November meeting Chris made a report on behalf of the sub-group in which he reaffirmed that 'there is some mileage in this' and that it was a feasible practical proposition. He further reported that one 'band' had been approached. Only Pauline herself had shown any interest; the rest were 'categoric in their disinterest.' The sub-group had asked Christie and Pauline to check out the level of interest amongst the remainder of the workforce. Chris reported that only four members of the day staff had expressed any interest, with a slightly better reaction from the twilight people. Despite that, Chris still maintained that he would 'like to give it a twirl'.

> Pauline: "The main objection is that the girls are wondering what the fitters would be doing while the girls are doing the setting-up."
>
> Gayle (standing in for Betty): "If you go to get a fitter...they sit and wait, say, till they've finished their fag. So the girls don't want to do the set-ups."

Peter: "When I tried it informally, the changeovers were much better. I appreciate the girls point but I can give equal examples in the reverse direction. But I don't think we are here to argue across this table. This is one example where we can try and get together better."

Peter continues to pursue his positive line with the belief that participation should be concerned with a coming-together, a recognition of mutual interests and action on that basis. But he is disgruntled with the progress of the sub-committee and quite prepared for the group to initiate action off its own back, regardless of the immediate reaction of the membership. The old rivalries between different sections of the same department seem to be hampering progress, especially in the kind of direction sought by Peter and others.

Few of these points and the areas of conflict are reported in the minutes, nor is Peter's criticism that the real problem is a shortage of manpower, "which is something no one is prepared to accept or look into, this is one way to relieve that - for everyone to help." Much interesting discussion (as that above and below) is glossed over and undocumented.

It is clear that the group has very divided opinions and hopes for the proposal:

Peter: "The idea could collapse on two counts:
a) if the girls were completely disinterested, or
b) if the company was completely disinterested.
Here we are OK on both counts. We should just go ahead and then get people's responses; we aren't going to allay the fears of the girls by just talking."

Gayle: "One important point is that if the girls do set ups, they can be classified as setters, and that will need upgrading. If they are not told that they will not be interested. If it were a union plant you wouldn't touch that machine."

Cyril: "It's been said that this is a new thing .. it isn't. I've been here a long time. We used to do it but we stopped doing it because the girls had to carry the can if the machines went wrong. The problem really, Mr. Kerrick, is that we are short of a fitter."

Kerrick: "But I thought that this idea was established to alleviate that problem."

Chris: "Yes, that's right. So the sub-group picked band five for a ....."

Anne: "No, we didn't pick it."

Peter + Pauline: "No" "That's right."

It seems unfortunate that the members of the committee have reached no prior agreement on how to tackle the issue. Each member seems to be concerned with different aspects of the issue. There is no sense of solidarity. This chaotic scene extends to the management members who still don't seem to know how to handle the issue, with Kerrick apparently happy to hive it off to the quango. There is more than a suspicion that certain people are pursuing hidden agendas. The fact that the issue of manning kept rearing it's head may not have been at all incidental to the purposes of the discussion. It might also be said that shop-floor reps. were, by this stage, beginning to develop definitions and meanings of their own in relation to participation, able to see beyond those provided from other sources. However, these were embryonic meanings and were in various stages of development. As yet amongst the reps. no common or consensual definitions had come to dominate their discourse. Indeed, some had not moved from the initial reactions of the mass of the shop-floor, and others had not penetrated or built on the definitions provided by management and/or the consultants. The issue of group solidarity was beginning to come into focus for some people and was to feature more and more in talk between meetings.

By the next meeting it soon became apparent that very little progress had been made. Chris had to apologise for not co-ordinating the sub-group adequately. But it was agreed that the group had been 'over enthusiastic' and, as the minutes correctly state, the proposal should be reworded. The term 'encouragement' had been coined from somewhere and there was some debate as to exactly what this might entail. For Chris it meant being informal, not putting people off with a specific proposal that they could react negatively to. For Hamming it was not a passive thing but something that should be actively pursued.

Chris: "The advantage now is that it's more simple, it's a question of actual encouragement down on the shop-floor .. John and Martin and individual fitters can make it work, can make it happen."

John: "There's a question of safety here. No way will I encourage people to do things if I think they can be harmed."

Chris: "Well .. everyone out there is an intelligent human being. It's only a matter of degree."

John: "In certain cases I have to actually discourage things."

As will be recalled, John perhaps felt under the most pressure from what had taken place, the most unsure of how to respond. His response here reflects that uncertainty. He is at once both accommodating and then entrenched, traditional and aggressive. He is also made to recognise how out of step he is with the manner of other line managers. He had become increasingly isolated. He had retreated to a position where he would not take any risks (or so he thought) where he would not step beyond clearly defined responsibilities. But by this stage his talk has a smattering of gestures towards the workforce and the reps. in particular, and towards the scheme in general.

Again, intra-shop-floor wranglings interferes with a co-operative and unitedly positive approach to issues. The twilight group had responded more positively than the day staff and there was a tension around how to handle that. There was some disputation about differential treatment of the two groups even in relation to the machinations of the participation committee.

Attempts were made to accommodate this by regaining the issue for normal, everyday procedures that were taken to go on despite participation. The issue is gratefully reclaimed by management, allowing them to demonstrate that in their routine capacities, they are still able to fulfil some of the supposed obligations of participation. It re-serves the status qua ante: we do/are already participating, our natures and our habitual work practices are sufficient. Cyril is quick to assert that what is being proposed is already taking place informally. He cites an example from a twilight shift where he claims he and some operatives had agreed to some set-ups. But again he is supportive of the group and eager to demonstrate his reasonableness in relation to the scheme.

Cyril: "Given that attitude (of the twilight shift staff) it is a shame that this group falls on it's face and can't get the thing going properly."

Pauline: "But you can't if the girls won't .. if they are not interested."

Note again in the minutes that although much of the conversation concerned members of the shop-floor representation, it is only the contributions of Chris and one of the consultants that are documented.

The twilight staff were allowed to take some part in the setting-up arrangements on their shift. A practice that was formalised to a degree, although it was only given the status of a trial. Despite

some increased tension between the day and twilight staff, the issue slipped from public view almost entirely after that point.

The issue highlights a number of important points about the processes that were taking place at the time. The issue was one of the first of substance that was initiated by shop-floor reps. but was other than a grievance requiring repair work from management. It was a result of Peter's, in particular, slowly emerging definitions, a suggestion that concretised his talk of a positive attitude, of common interests, of working together to the betterment of all, and a proactive group of representatives. It shows all too clearly that some members had shifted ground faster and/or in different directions from others. Most noticeably the reps. as a body had moved ground away from their members on the floor. They had not been able to grasp the likely response of their colleagues. Their enthusiasm did not find an echo in the body of the workforce. Most operatives reacted in traditional fashion. They were suspicious of motives behind the suggestion; it was not their issue (so it must be a management issue). They did not accept that definition of participation that valued this type of proposal, or that endorsed that type of working practice. The view that participation might entail the extension of working responsibilities for intrinsic and not renumerative rewards was shunned and derided by the members; clearly not a definition they were ready to accept.

The line management reps. can also be witnessed here to be developing definitions of their own. They no longer mutely mimic pre-given company definitions. However, there is still some uncertainty amongst this group, they have not been able to find settled ground. They tend to oscillate between positive and supportive responses in which they often move towards a position occupied by the shop-floor;

at other times they readily revert to traditional managerial ways of talking and restate their managerial prerogatives. This issue was not an attack on them in any way so they could afford to be magnanimous perhaps. Indeed the issue could just have plausibly have been raised by a member of the management team. The only suggestion of conflict between levels was with the suggestion that the real issue was manning levels. Whether this was really part of the reason for the issue surfacing or whether it was thrown in opportunistically, never became clear. It will be noted, however, that Cyril, in particular, backed the shop-floor reps, with that analysis and implied criticism of senior management.

A major part of the shop floor's complaint was that they would want extra money for these extra tasks. The twilight girls were allowed to proceed with set-ups on a temporary, trial basis, but the issue of reimbursement had died away for some reason. Senior management reps. tended to ignore that part of the issue and returned conversation to the values of the proposal in other ways. Although it was repeatedly mentioned by membership it was never discussed at any of the meetings in any detail. The reps. simply reported it as a response of the membership but seemed unprepared to negotiate around the point.

The fate of the issue had a bad effect upon some of the reps. It was an issue put forward by them, a positive gesture. Other issues had failed to progress because of some intransigence on the part of management, but here the reps. failed to take their membership with them. The mood of the workforce had been misjudged. There was further dissatisfaction with some of the ways the problem had been tackled. The issue had been very slow to make any ground, the same points were gone over at successive meetings with little headway being made. Part of this was due, in part, to the issue being handed over to Chris, who,

at times, failed to make time for an adequate consideration of what was at stake. It was hampered too by interference of some long-standing interdepartmental rivalries, something that the reps. could have minimised and kept out of the meeting if they had got together outside the meeting and worked at a unified position.

The Politics of Envy

The second issue, that of half-hour lunch breaks and leaving at three-thirty, is perhaps the more revealing and typical of the two. It is this issue that most readily demonstrates some of the emerging meanings and the sense of definition and counter-definition. In this case the membership and the reps. were on common ground in pressing the issue and came into more direct conflict with the containing definitions of management. It was also an issue that led to the shop-floor reps. becoming increasingly reflective of the strategies they should adopt, and to pay attention again to the way they and others defined participation. The position adopted by line management is again crucial.

This issue did belong to the workforce. My records show that the issue was first brought up by the chargehand group at a pre-meeting early on in February. It was taken up by other groups at later pre-meetings over the next few months. There appeared to be widespread support for the idea. But the issue did not even get on the agenda until September and then only as a question under 'any other business'. It was rapidly pushed aside by Kerrick. This was repeated at the meeting a month later. The issue had still not had a proper airing and it was clear that management were not keen to get involved in the thing.

At the December meeting the chair was taken by Mr. Austin, the head of the packaging area. He took firm control of the agenda and seemed to want to bypass the 3.30 leave issue. It was left to Cyril to bring the attention of the group back to the issue.

Austin: "Item seven seems ..."

Cyril: "Uh, can I come in on five, Bryan?"

Austin: "Uhhm .. five .. well .."

Cyril: (speaking over Austin) "There is a question on the agenda concerning leaving at three-thirty."

Cyril makes a lengthy speech in which he relates the issue to the wider problem of rationalising the hours at the site end of 'levelling off' the hours. He points to some existing anomalies and suggests that until the issue can be examined in totality, he can see no reason why the specific issue raised by the group cannot be progressed now. Mr. Austin is clearly rather taken aback and passed on to Macheath for his comments. Macheath too was unsettled and waffled around the topic, not exactly shutting it off but not opening it up either. He pointed out that the issue has very wide implications, particularly in the way Cyril had caste it and that they should be aware of its site wide implications at the least; with possible 'knock-on effects' and the 'politics of envy'.

Kirknatch intervenes to say that the point of Cyril's contribution is to aver that he is not happy with the replies to the issue thus far. The group must consider what the consensual view is and make it clear if they are not in agreement with the treatment of the issue and the quality of the answers given.

Chris tries to return the issue to the localised one of the department leaving at three-thirty but Cyril wants to keep on with the wider implications. He points out that there is a pay award in six

months time giving an opportunity to progress the issue. He reminds management that some time ago the company had led the town in moving from a forty-five to a forty hour week. Cyril is seeking to exploit the company's own rhetoric where they present themselves as a progressive, forward-thinking, caring company. It must be said, however, that in expanding the issue in this way he had lost some of the other reps. around the table, and rattled the management reps. Austin tried to restore order:

Austin: "What do the others think?"

Pauline: "I don't see why we can't give it a try."

Peter: "I'm in complete agreement with Cyril."

(Others too express agreement)

Kirknatch and Hamming make specific reference to the minuting of the debate, and want to ensure that the minutes show that the group had expressed dissatisfaction with the reasons given in reply to this issue and were awaiting proper reasons. It will be noted that the minutes only go some way towards meeting these recommendations. It was further urged that the reps. go back to their groups to access opinion there. Peter complains that that is a further waste of time, the majority of members are clearly in favour, there is no need to go back to the membership. Kirknatch insisted that adequate preparation be undertaken on what he identified as a 'very sensitive' issue. Austin summarised by saying that for the next meeting reps. should come prepared with the views of their members, advantages and disadvantages; and the company should provide reasons for a refusal to progress the issue. Neither of these points were made clear on the minutes in that sort of detail.

The reps. had already received both formal and informal indications that the proposal would not be allowed to proceed. They had

decided not to allow the issue to rest, however, and were pressing management to make clear what the reasons are. Here again the reps. are making use of management's own rhetoric. Management had made much play of the importance of the obligation of the provision of adequate reasons in response to issues. Those promises are now being called in. In presenting their definitions to the membership, management had not merely dumped a frame, ready made, upon a passive workforce. Whatever the immediate force of the rhetoric, the company has no control over the future use and meanings given to the definitions they provide. They have to run the risk that what they make public, remains public, and can be manifested at times that may not be convenient to them.

It is important to be aware that it is a member of line management, Cyril, who takes up the issue and presses management. It is he that even extends the debate beyond its original narrower confines. His points about levelling off of hours etc. are laundered from the minutes. A stage has been reached where a member of line management feels able to offer direct challenges to senior management; it is Cyril who calls on management to justify their reasons for shelving the issue.

The reps. reported at the next meeting that the majority of the membership were clearly in favour of the proposal and did not accept that the issue was site wide. It was considered that the packaging group were sufficiently separate from the rest of the site for the implementation of the proposal not to create any problems, either administratively or in terms of inter-departmental tension. They made a plea that they be allowed to try the suggestion on a trial basis.

Kerrick adopted the same line he had pursued from the outset. The issue was deemed to be 'site wide' and thus beyond the auspices

of the group. In detail, the implementation of the proposal would seem unfair to other sections of the workforce who were not in a position, yet, to debate and act on such an issue. It was being suggested that the proposal before the group had implications that might/would affect others on site outside of the group and those they represented. Issues relating to other areas were not the responsibility of this group but <u>are</u> the responsibility of others; of senior management. Participation, on current definitions, can only operate in relation to those issues that have a bearing on the department to which the group belong. Participation, on this version, specifically seeks to exclude issues that <u>may</u> have an effect on other sections of the site. Such a ruling restores to management its right to make decisions on all issues affecting the site and the workforce as a whole. It limits the rights and responsibilities of the participation committee to localised issues only, to those issues that pertain only to intra-department affairs and that can be retained within the department. The obvious questions concern, how is it decided what is, and what is not, a departmental issue; and perhaps most pertinently,who is able to decide and judge which issues belong to which status. Is it the case that a request for increased facilities in the canteen and subsequent capital expenditure is purely a departmental issue? Does capital expenditure not have any implications beyond the department? Is it not possible that the provision of extra canteen facilities would cause some envy in those parts of the factory not 'privileged' with a participative system? Clearly the committee chairman in the first instance assumes the responsibility for deciding on these questions. That is to say, rulings on what are and what are not legitimate issues for this group to debate and decide upon are subject, in the first instance, to the will of senior management. That

is not to say, of course, that such rulings are not challengeable, as we shall see.

Indeed by the January meeting the reps. were challenging this right to foreclose on an issue. They questioned the prerogative of management to shut off the issue prematurely without what they took to be adequate reasons. They further contested that the issue was definable as a site wide issue. Such a stance generated some debate about the criteria by which management could conclude that an issue was of this status. It was made apparent that there were inadequate concrete reasons or evidence for such a ruling, and that in fact Kerrick had made the decision either on the basis of instructions from outside the group, or was operating on various untested assumptions.

The reps. elected to take some initiative of their own. They submitted their own and their members views on the issue. A summary, presented on their behalf by Austin, of what were seen as the advantages and disadvantages of implementing the suggestion. Austin was allocated the responsibility of imparting this information to Kerrick, who undertook to represent their views to the Managing Director's staff group. In both instances the issue had been handed over to a member of management, although the relative impartiality of Austin was not under suspicion. However, in agreeing to the issue going to the staff group, and then not as a request or demand but rather as a discussion proposal, the group had tacitly given consent to the issue being defined as site wide.

Once out of the hands of the group the issue was subjected to some management-initiated conditions and 'tests'. From the staff group the issue was taken, on instruction, by each area director to their sections. They were given some kind of brief to canvas the

opinion of their sections. The exact nature of the brief and the types of questions to be asked was never made explicit, and this was to become an issue itself subsequently. The directors reported back to the staff group and then Kerrick reported back to the packaging committee.

> Kerrick: "As you know, at the last meeting it was suggested that (Mr. Austin) go away and come back to me with information about this issue ... so that I could discuss it with the staff group. At that meeting it was decided to try and get members to look at the implications of the suggestion in other divisions. I must report that it is clear that we can't proceed with leaving at three-thirty on Friday.
> I think I owe it to this group to explain the reasons for this decision.
> Decisions of this type can't be made in isolation. There must be fairness to all groups. And there are some groups where it would be impractical to implement this type of arrangement (gives an example). Also there were other areas of the site where the majority weren't keen to do it anyway. As you can see this sort of action can give rise to divisions that can lead to all sorts of problems. Some employees expressed a clear wish to retain the three-quarter hour lunch break.
> We were also aware that there would be increased pressure on the canteen .. it would require further staggering.
> These problems in isolation are perhaps soluble, but overall they have led to the decision I've just given you. So overall, for these variety of reasons we have decided against this proposal."

Before proceeding with the debate I want to draw attention to the disparity between this presentation and that reported in the minutes. The 'reasons' in the minutes are far more detailed. It seems clear that in the editing and constructing of the minutes, the arguments had been tidied up, ordered and added to. More than anywhere else the minutes on this point most obviously and overtly represent a company standpoint. Note that throughout the minutes the use of "we" in reference to the reasons itemised and the arguments put forward, as does Kerrick in his presentation. Although the subsequent dis-

cussion was long and involved, it is the contribution of Kerrick that is almost exclusively documented. Note too that Kerrick gives virtually no details as to how the views of other departments were canvassed.

The discussion continues:

Anne: "Why does it have to involve everybody?"

Kerrick: "It has been our experience in the past that if you do it to one group, other groups tend to get feelings of being unfairly treated."

Betty: "Yes, but take the office people, I mean they leave at 4.00 o'clock everyday - they are part of the group. Surely we could do it once a week."

Kerrick: "It's very difficult to change things once a system has been set up. There are historical reasons for some of these things. We have decided to retain the status quo."

Peter: "Why doesn't the company look at the whole thing. Why don't they rationalise the whole set up?"

Betty: "The office staff always seem to get what they want, but the factory side never do."

The reps. are not happy with the reasons given. They still don't see the logic of defining the issue as site wide; especially as there exist certain anomalies on the site already. Certain groups have already been allowed to enter into special arrangements vis-a-vis working hours. The explanation of these differences are not adequate either. Kerrick talks vaguely of 'historical reasons' and hints at the problems of custom and practice deals. Betty once again gives voice to inter-departmental rivalries and jealousies.

Cyril shifts the argument onto a different footing by declaring that even if the group accepts Kerrick's points, there is still a case for looking at the twilight staff and their claim to work a four day week by doing more hours Monday to Thursday. The working hours of the twilight group could not be said to interfere with anyone else. How-

ever, there is a strong suggestion from other members of the committee that if the twilight staff are allowed this right, then the day staff would feel even more aggrieved. This was to become more of an issue as the debate progressed, but others were keen to return to the central argument.

Peter: "We are in danger of coming to a standstill; we are in danger of not doing anything in case it affects other groups. If we want to do something we have to consult other people and we then immediately get wide differences of opinion; then we are told we can't proceed because there are differences of opinion."

Chris: "Were there practical reasons .. I mean, affecting efficiency of running or whatever, or was it ....?"

Hamming: "That they didn't like the idea."

Chris: "Yes. I was trying to put it more nicely."

Kerrick: "I had an open mind, but found that it is not a new problem. It is necessary to be fair to all. I was convinced that we should not go ahead at the moment ..."

Chris: "Yes, yes, but does our leaving at three-thirty actually affect the running of other areas?"

Kerrick: "Well, no, not really. It's more a question of other people perhaps wanting to do the same thing but not being able to for practical reasons in their departments, they would then feel it was unfair."

Austin: "Perhaps we've acted too strongly ... O.K. other people might not be able to do this, but they aren't losing anything. There is a group here that can take advantage. Maybe it's just tough on those other groups."

Peter is clearly very frustrated and shows the "catch 22" situation the group had been placed in. His contribution reveals the illogicality of the management stance and begins to expose some of the contradictions at the heart of their rhetoric. All the reps. are aware, perhaps more than management, of the increasing pressure they are under from their members, of the need to demonstrate some

effectiveness and of all the complaints about nothing of consequence being done. What is most noticeable at this stage is that both Chris and Austin are questioning the decision reached by their superiors and are adopting the same sceptical and challenging stance as the shop-floor reps. Indeed the middle management reps. are often leading the questioning and formulating the objectives.

Kerrick reaffirms his position and tries to deflect the debate by raising again the separate case of the twilight shift. The reps. still feel that the day girls would react strongly. It is Chris that makes a positive lead at this point:

> Chris: "Look, if we as a group complain when outsiders object and stop us doing something .. we must now look to ourselves. Would we complain if the twilight got it and we didn't?"
>
> Kerrick: "The case of the twilight is not really comparable. I mean there are different arrangements on site already for various reasons. There are some arguments for saying 'no' to the day people that do not apply to the twilight. So we should address ourselves to the general principle."
>
> Chris: "If we expect the rest of the site to allow us we must be prepared to allow twilight amongst ourselves."
>
> Peter: "I agree, it must go through. But does it have to be put before other sections again? Because we already have their answer."

Other reps. are less noble and the old squabbles burden the discussion again. As Hamming says in an aside to Kirknatch: "They are fighting each other instead of the system". The whole debate has a nice moral edge to it at this point. The day staff are angry because their request had been put down and were now loathe to see the twilight staff get the same sort of privilege they were denied. They are behaving towards the twilight group in the same way they had complained that the rest of the site had behaved towards them. In the end, Kerrick agrees to forward the twilight's four day week as a separate

issue. Despite what had been said earlier, particlarly by Peter, the group allowed the issue out of their hands to be considered by the staff group. I suspect that for all parties concerned at the committee, the question of the twilight group was something of a face-saver. For the reps. it meant that something, however partial, could be demonstrated to have been achieved. For management it was a way of softening the blow and of giving some ground to a disgruntled workforce.

After this meeting feelings were running high. The scheme was at its lowest point since it had begun. This is clearly demonstrated by the comments of the group members to me after the meeting.

I spoke to Chris, Austin and Kerrick immediately after the meeting:

R.I.W.: "What did you think of that?"

Chris: (pulls a face) "Not very much. I think there was a lot of pretence."

(separately, Kerrick's response was cautious with a front of optimism.)

Kerrick: "I thought it went all right generally. We've got to be clear. We can bring things .. can discuss things and so on .. but, uh .. but a decision has to be made, whether they are liked or not. And that .. uhm .. is where management are .. involved."

Kerrick, after the defeat of the issue, reaffirms the traditional managerial values. He reasserts the apparent inevitability of managerial prerogative. Participation is once again firmly rooted in those definitions that confine it to mere discussion of problems. Participation is a forum for the debate of topics but any final decision must remain the right of management. Management can define what issues are appropriate to the group and make a binding ruling on that.

Austin, who had not been on the committee from the beginning, tried to take a more detached view, eliding any sense of personal involvement.

> Austin: "I'm glad Mr. Kerrick was chairing the meeting, it's very difficult .. he's in a difficult position. In that sort of position he is representing the company, he's reflecting the views of his fellow directors. Their view was 'no' so he has to put that whatever his own feelings may be.
> But I don't think it will go down very well with the girls."
>
> R.I.W.: "Do you think, perhaps, that he shouldn't have presented it as a clear-cut decision, perhaps he could have said - here are some of the arguments..."
>
> Austin: "Well, I don't see how he could really. That <u>is</u> the decision .. for now anyway."

The minutes reflect Austin's observation, the 'company' had taken a stand on the issue. In Kerrick's presentation, and in the minutes there is evidence of a different style of expression, a style that is clearly intended to get across that what is being put forward is the 'company' view. It obtains a certain weight by virtue of that and further closes on the issue by imparting a sense of an irrefutable decision having been made by the 'authorities'. The minutes are at base a tool, an instrument of the power base of the company and it is inevitable that when that power is most closely challenged they will be used in that way. Kerrick's conversational points are edited and martialled into a set of discrete and itemized arguments that attempt to give a sense of order, rationality and researched fairness to the decision of the elite. The counter-arguments of the reps. are not put on display, there is merely a registration that they were 'disappointed'.

However, it is amongst the reps. and the shop-floor that the greatest dissatisfaction was to be found. It is Peter who gives most

forceful expression to those feelings of frustration and anomie:

Peter: "It's the same old story, this participation group doesn't really do anything. We haven't made any decision. We formulate the problem - the issue - we discuss it and even work out a proposal, but then it's taken out of our hands. We don't really decide .. nor does our own management come to that. Mr. Kerrick takes it away to his executive group or steering group or whatever .. they make the decision.
They make it a site-wide issue, their excuse then is that the people in other departments would feel envious if we had the scheme in our department.
At the last meeting the issue seemed to be going quite well, it seemed likely that we would get the go ahead .. now we have a complete turnabout since it's been to the executive. I think the people on the shop-floor probably got the feeling that it would go through.
And then the reasons for not doing it .. Kerrick admitted that there were no practical reasons why we couldn't do it on our own - it wouldn't affect the work of any other department. The reasons were all feelings - the feelings of men in other departments - 'if they have it, why can't we?', or rather 'if we can't have it (because of the nature of our work) then nor should they'."

(I mention to Peter that we do not actually know how the directors of the other departments went about gauging the opinions of their staff - we don't know how it was done or the questions asked; perhaps that is something the group ought to check on)

Peter: "But we have no system for doing that. There is no way we can go round the site checking shop-floor opinion. Management have a number of means by which they can get access to shop-floor opinion - to get information up or down - but we haven't."

R.I.W.: "We could check with management how they went about it, if it was not done properly the group could complain that the reasons given were not adequately supported."

Peter: "How would that tell us anything really, they can always interpret the way they got the information as they wish. They can always get a few of their people together quickly and sort something out.
If we say that some people had told us they supported us, the management can always reply that the general feeling in the department was so-and-so, how can we check up on that?"

He goes on to suggest that a feasible strategy would have been to devise some mechanism whereby the group could also access for themselves the general feelings of the shop-floor in other departments. To be in a position to collect their own information. A second strategy also emerged:

Peter: "At the time I thought that we should just have gone ahead with it; do it as a trial or an experiment without referring outside the group. We could just have announced to the department that as from such-and-such a date this department would be operating a three-thirty system, and on such-and-such a date the experiment would end. In that way we would get out the real feelings of the shop-floor. People in this company don't really say what they really think. We would either get a strong reaction against or not. If not, then OK we can go ahead. I don't believe we would have got a strong reaction against. People might have said, 'we would like to try that, but in our way', they could then work that out in their own department. If there were areas where there was a strong feeling against then perhaps the people from packaging could have gone into those areas and put their point of view."

.....

"If management had just gone in 'dry' to those other departments without explaining the background and so on, and asked people simply what they thought of the proposal, then I think the likely initial response would be negative. People don't like change, they would naturally respond negatively to a proposal of change if it's just put to them in that way. The managers would be doing what we, the reps., were doing initially. We too got negative responses at first .. we had to do some work .. Pauline had to do some work, Iris had to overcome some differences. In other words the reps. had to actively sell the scheme to some extent. The way this was done management are tapping off-the-cuff responses, they are only going to get one type of possible response."

.....

"Even when the thing is site-wide there are still going to be difficulties. Each department, although broadly they may want similar things, there will still be varieties and differences. Management can then keep saying - 'well you can't do this or that, the other departments don't like it.' Or each

> "departmental proposal could be treated by them as incompatible with other departments' views. If this is how participation is going to work out here, the way it is at the moment, it will mean that there won't be any changes in the company. It's a vehicle for no-change. They can use it to keep things as they are by doing things like they have over this issue.
> As reps. we need a means for the shop-floor to get together - some sort of general meeting, or at least some chance for the reps. to agree on what they are going to say, and to get an accurate gauging of people's opinions. Otherwise each department is going to have it's own views and proposals. Even at this level, we, as packaging reps., should meet and get some consensus on the issues before the meeting. We all want to know what each reps. group feels about things .. not necessarily so that we can have a united confrontation with management, but just so at least we know what is going on; so we get at the true feelings of the groups."

I mention to Peter that I thought he was already meeting informally with his fellow reps., he maintains that he does see some of them occasionally but they don't really talk about the issues in any detail. He further suggests that he would include Cyril in such pre-meetings of this kind. For him, Cyril is 'in a similar position to us in some respects'. He sees no objections to Cyril knowing what is going on before the main meeting, so that he is in a position to provide proper answers and will not be forced to cover up and disguise things:

> "I don't think participation is about trying to catch people out; trying to make them look foolish."

It must be made clear that Peter was one of the most articulate of the reps. and his sophisticated reflections and developing definitions of participation are somewhat in advance of his colleagues. Some of the reactions of the other reps. follow Peter to a degree but he is better equipped to put the feelings and views into words. I think his talk here displays a remarkable analysis of the situation he and his colleagues find themselves facing. It is clear that his definitions of participation have grown, become more complex, as the

scheme developed. If what he is saying here is compared to some of the shop-floor discourse about participation reported earlier the sense of emerging definitions and the creation of fresh meanings will most forcibly be struck home.

Perhaps the most noticeable change is that the reps. have shed that positioning definition that pictured them as passive portrayers of the views and problems of their membership. Peter clearly rejects the view that the shop-floor members merely bring the (minor) grievances of their groups to the meeting, there to pass them over to management for an adjudication. There has been agradual shift towards a definition of participation where the reps. together with the rest of the group act together as a legislative and executive body. The group should be responsible, in isolation, and as a group, for raising issues, discussing them and for deciding upon and implementing necessary action. This requires that the reps. be much more proactive. They should instigate issues that are of significance and be prepared to take responsibility for them, to be a party to the debates and to the formulation of decisions relating to them. Furthermore, the reps. need to be proactive in another sense. In order to take a full part in the discussions and to be in a position to contribute to the argument and to the genesis of a solution and appropriate decisions, they need to undertake more preparation. It is no longer seen as sufficient to vaguely define a problem and present it to management. The issue must be clearly defined and the views of the membership more systematically canvassed. Then the reps. individually, and as a cohesive group, need to work on the issue, develop consensus and work on a case that can hold up in debate with management. The group must then be prepared to take responsibility for the decisions and to have the courage to oversee the implementation of the required action.

Peter, and some of the others had come to be increasingly aware that the meanings they had come to hold about participation had moved on beyond a position retained by their constituents. Many of the shop-floor workers were still responding to and defining participation in the same way that they had from the outset. Such a realisation leads Peter to suggest that the initiating activity of the reps. needs to be extended to their relations to their membership. He is even prepared to take action independently of his membership, to initiate actions over their head and get their reactions retrospectively. The reps. are no longer defined as simply delegates solely mandated by the membership, but have come to be defined more like parliamentary reps. who are at liberty to lead the rest of the group and to take action on their behalf. The shop-floor has a new set of leaders; these wear overalls and boiler suits rather than collars and ties.

The membership are still tending to define issues in terms of grievances that they lay at the door of management to put right. When they are asked to take a more active part they respond apathetically and even reply that such things are not their concern, but that management is there to deal with them. They reaffirm the traditional divisions and hierarchies. There was a growing tension between the reps. and those they represent; some even went so far as to suggest that the reps. were now 'company' people. Many of the shop-floor had not moved out of the original 'moaning and groaning' interpretation of participation. They retained their scepticism and their talk still reverberated with the long established motifs of dejection, frustration, powerlessness and anomie. They still felt that nothing would really change and any set back received by the reps. was merely confirmation of the veracity of their view. They further retained a

very parochial attitude. The efforts of the group were continuously plagued by a language of inter- and intra-departmental rivalry and jealousy. Despite the group constantly debating this problem under the rubric of 'communications', any understanding and tolerance did not seem to get passed on to the membership.

The more idealistic and positive definitions of the reps. are balanced by an awareness of the barriers they were encountering from management. They had become increasingly aware that they were involved in a more confrontational affair than they had at first surmised. One might say that the reps. meanings had initially been guided by the rhetoric of management, the talk of mutuality, of sharing, of involvement,of making a positive contribution seemed to have been adopted by the reps. But when they took this rhetoric at its word they were frequently disappointed. As a number of people pointed out, there was a disparity between 'what they say and what they do'. Over time the limits of the rhetoric had been exposed. The reps. had discovered that all the goodly talk had its very finite limits in action. In the exchanges between the various members of the committee and others outside, the parameters of the management definitions are played out and revealed. The realisation that the meanings are made to be contingent on situations and contexts is brought home to the reps. 'All issues can be discussed' does not relate to <u>all</u> issues in all contexts. 'Mutuality' sometimes means that management will make the decisions. On issues deemed to relate only to the department, participation means taking full part in the discussions and a share in the implementation of the decisions taken. But in the context of issues declared to be 'site-wide' then only management can decide and participation is ruled out of bounds or confined to limited debate.

The reps. had come to recognise that management's definitions meant that they retained control over the progress and determination of issues; that the shop-floor had been positioned as the bearer of issues for the consideration of management. They had come to notice that issues were regularly taken out of their sphere of influence and decided upon away from the group by those who had always made the decisions. Any important issue that came in any way close to challenging management's prerogative and traditional spheres of influence and control, were treated in this way. Senior management were happy whilst some of their juniors were being made to give ground at a departmental level but as soon as issues encrouched on their habitual areas of responsibility, the boundaries were rapidly drawn.

Part of the definitions developed at this stage reflect the realisation of this more confrontational attitude and the construction of barriers. Some of the middle-phase idealistic, positive, 'we can all work together' definitions gave way to a language where the elements form more happy associations with talk of strategies and the formation of coalitions. Peter talks of the need for preparation; of the need for his 'side' to meet informally to work on their case; of selling the scheme to others. He talks, for instance, of the requirement of the reps. to have mechanisms for getting access to the rest of the workforce to check out the reports of management and to glean evidence of their own. He recognises that the system operates in such a way that senior management have at their disposal all the means of doing so. They have in their armoury the control of information and the means of its collection and distribution. They had come to recognise this disparity to some extent when they began to question the control of the minutes and the agenda, now they

have come to realise that this advantage spreads further and has important consequences. The power differences in terms of the control of the means of signification were steadily becoming more and more apparent to the reps. and they were beginning to think of ways they might counter that.

Peter gets to the heart of the matter when he recognises with frustration that management are in a position to interpret and give to events and information the meanings they choose. They have the solidarity that the reps. have failed to accomplish, they have the organisation to create time and space to join together and work on a common stand. They have the incentive and the shared taken-for-granteds that enable them to present a common view; a company view. As 'company' view what they have to say has added force, and not merely because it is backed up by invocable sanctions. Their assertions, as well as being tailored to suit their purposes, are rather immune from informed disputation. The version they put on offer is by fiat, the official version, its sources are circularly, 'the company'. The way that version is put together is also the property of the company and is not subject to scrutiny by outsiders. The shop-floor do not have the means to check the sources, they cannot adequately call the proposed version to account.

Peter and the other reps. talk with an awareness of the strategies and means that management have to guard and guide issues. The realisation includes the fact that senior management were able to control the interpretations of events, to present their versions as credible and legitimate. They also had a greater capacity to banish alternative versions. This entails, as far as Peter is concerned, the likely perpetuation of the status quo. It means that the company will not permit significant change. Things within departments may be allowed to alter, but the fundamental systems and

structures of control are likely to remain intact. Participation, despite the rhetoric is merely "a vehicle of no-change". The management had presented participation as something new, it had been 'sold' to the operatives as a system that would 'change' things, even though how and what was usually not made clear. The reps. are now forced to chronically doubt that definition. The operatives had always been sceptical that any change had, or would take place. The reps., perhaps more exposed to the rhetoric, had seemingly had more faith, but that faith was now severely tested. Even the promise of a site-wide scheme that had been held as the carrot and as that point when all barriers would finally come down was now viewed with suspicion. There was little to stop senior management controlling the meanings in that situation as they had done before. They would not lose their power to define things; they would still have contol over most of the means by which the signifying process has its impact.

The talk of the reps. at this stage is still transitional and somewhat confused. There is still much optimistic talk about solving common problems, of constructive attitudes and the rest of the rather idealistic meanings surrounding participation that had been characteristic of, what might be termed, the middle phase. Much of this talk is still a partial mimesis of the presented definitions of senior management and the consultants. But mixed with that is a newer, tougher array of associations where participation is in relationship to strategy, with potential confrontation, with coalitions. These new meanings get their greatest force from the relations with that which is now not-participation. It is now entertained that participation may not mean a benevolent management giving way to a moaning workforce. Participation does not mean giving issues passively to management and allowing them to come back with all decisions ready made and clear cut. Participation does not mean mere

discussion with no influence on the decisions and no responsibility for the actions taken. Participation still means formal meetings with a representational system etc. but it also means informal clandestine meetings outside the bounds of that formal organisation. Participation would mean a challenging of management's decisions and reasons; it might mean a challenging of long seated managerial prerogatives; it might even mean open challenge. There is even the vaguest hint that it might entail the attempt at unilateral action. These meanings, and others, had become a part of, at least some, of the representatives discourse over the course of time.

The reps. were at a low ebb, their frustration led to expressions of some distrust in the consultants. They had also had a great deal of difficulty with their membership who now felt that all their scepticism and apathy had been fully justified. Many of the operatives on the floor now declared that they had lost what little faith they may have had in participation. The situation was so bad that the consultants decided to meet the shop-floor reps. and those of line management separately before the next meeting in an attempt to clear the air and revitalise the scheme.

CHAPTER 5

RE-PRESENTING PARTICIPATION

At about the time of the first review meeting in the packaging group in June, plans were being made to extend the scheme into a third area of the company. By October approaches were being made to various parties associated with the Dry Products department, yet another part of the Pharmaceutical Productions Division. The process by which the scheme was introduced to this new group followed past methods quite closely. Again the consultants were given the major responsibility for talking to members of the workforce, ostensibly to assess if there was sufficient interest to warrant an extension into the area and to help the group towards the first stages. In this section I want to consider the re-presentation of participation by management and by the consultants to see if the definitions on offer had altered in light of experiences in other departments. I will spend a little time examining the definitional process amongst the group, to see members initial reactions and the emergence of other meanings. The analysis and description will not be as detailed in relation to this group as it was to the packaging group.

More of the Same: Plus

The Minutes of the 'Worker Participation Steering Group' which met on Wednesday 5th July stated that it had been agreed that "a new group would be started in the Dry Products area." Thus a decision had already been made before the membership of the department were approached; although it was also agreed that "some discussion would be needed on the exact form of this group". The steering group at this time consisted of P. Sherry, (Managing Director); the Personnel Director; Macheath; Chris (from packaging); Mr. Austin;

the latter twos' equivalent from the Chemical group; Mr. Kerrick; and the two consultants. It was this inner-cabinet that guided policy on the future development of participation. All decisions made by the steering group had the seal of approval from the managing director, they were in that sense 'company' decisions and views and had considerable weight as a result. Any challenge to the opinions of this group would be a challenge to some of the most powerful men on site.

Already at this stage the talk is about representatives and constituents and other trappings of representational democracy. There is talk in these minutes of "communications" and of "training", recognisable discourse extracts from the past. There is also talk in this set of minutes of the future extension of the scheme into an area outside the pharmaceutical production area that is further revealing of the current nature of managerial discourse in relation to participation. The intended area is the engineering section. Some revealing comments are made:

> "In a work sense there is already considerable participation in the Project Engineering group."
>
> "The three Managers in the area already have a fairly natural participative style."
>
> "It was also agreed that every encouragement should be given to those groups which were still working in an informal way."

It had always been a fairly common retort of some managers that they were already participating. That view is here given official sanction. This definition circulates with those meanings that have participation as a matter of personal style (another feature of the minutes, note), of informal systems (that are taken to be

already in existence, if under-used) of communication 'down' and of 'discussion'. Once again participation is retrieved from the unknown and is rehabilitated into normal, traditional and existing procedures. Again, it's something that managers do for, or to, the workforce. Certain contradictions are revealed in the relationship between these and some other meanings put forward in the management discourse. Participation is put into relationship with change and with 'newness'. Management talk aligns participation with potential and actual changes in the way things are done; people are urged that it will entail different and new ways of going about things. How does this square with the view here that participation is already present in current procedures? Participation clothes itself in newness and innovation, in progressiveness and at the same time in traditionalism and as part of the existing order. Elsewhere, participation is in relation to formal meetings and with the mechanism of representational democracy, here it is in relation to informal and ad hoc routine practices.

Later in the same minutes reference is made to the old spatial metaphor. Participation is to be "extended upwards". Participation is again made to match the existing hierarchical structure of the organisation. This extension upwards, here refers to the training and involvement of various levels of management. Reference is again made to the "skills of participative management". Participation can be taught, it is a skill that you can train people to master. Participation is made a matter of individual abilities, thus deflecting attention from concern with important questions of the hierarchical structure and power arrangements. Intertextually this ties in with those aspects of social science literature that

identifies the ills of society in the individual, and societal change as deriving from the 'actualisation' of the individual. Individual natures and/or ways of behaving can be 'humanised' thus effecting the groundwork for the potentiality of wider change. At some point this view encounters that justificatory discourse in which T-groups are praised as a method for changing individuals and thereby changing organisations. The minutes have already stated that some individual managers have a 'natural participative style'. So participation is also not an unnatural skill that must be taught, rather it is some kind of innate disposition that some have in greater abundance than others; for some, those seeds need to be brought to fruition with the aid of a little training. The emphasis throughout is on individualism and questions of structure and organisation are pushed to one side. Elsewhere, of course, the emphasis is reversed; participation is directly concerned with the structure of the organisation and with the development of formal and complex administrative arrangements. Participation is explicitly and deliberately 'laid over' the existing hierarchical structure of the organisation. Some of this reflects a tension between the attempted definitions of the management and those of the consultants. Finally one might want to suggest that there is a fundamental problem with the very phrase 'participative management' or the notion of a 'participative style of management'. On some definitions there might be said to be a natural contradiction in the syntagmatic relationship between 'participative' and 'management'.

Another document was circulated to relevant members of senior management about this time. It should be noted that although the immediate plans were for extension into the Dry Products area there

were simultaneously discussions and plans being made for the extension of the scheme to a divisional level incorporating those three (inc. Dry Products) sections of the division already involved, and for extension into sections in a new division (Engineering). My greatest familiarity was with the Dry Products escapade, and it is to that that I chiefly refer in what follows. The document was entitled: "Structure for extension of participation: lateral development in Pharmaceutical Production". The spatial metaphor references the move into the Dry Products group specifically. The document gives a detailed plan for the process of introducing the scheme into this new department. The text refers to 'targets' and 'sequences of events'. It gives all the appearance of an agreed and already decided plan of action. It is not easy to see how such a programme could be resisted or altered significantly. This despite much talk about the need to involve people in the planning and implementation of the scheme, and how the format should be responsive to the needs and wishes of those upon whom it will impinge.

Point three of the document states:

> "The process - Greater involvement from (the consultants) in communicating decision to extend, particularly in selling the idea and dealing with the question of communication between representatives and constituents."

The notion of 'selling the idea' is particularly revealing and gives concrete expression to my observation that the scheme and the way it was presented can comfortably be talked about in terms of 'marketing'. There is clearly some learnt anticipation of a certain amount of scepticism and apathy. Note to, the ready use of terms like representative and constituent. Already the form of participation is being prejudged. The document ends:

"The future of the Steering Group concept would be discussed outside the meeting with P. Sherry and it will be suggested that because there is likely to be an acceleration of the participation processes, that P. Sherry's staff group becomes the Steering Group."

Whilst the above documents give some indication of the tone of current managerial discourse there were some other documents that had a more public and direct bearing on the re-presentation of participation. It will be recalled that with the presentation of participation to the packaging group a briefing document was prepared for all managers and directors to ensure a set communication about the intended extension to all employees. A very similar exercise was undertaken just prior to the introduction of the scheme in the Dry Products area. The texts are reproduced here. (The texts are in draft form, in the final version the information was embodied in the same kind of format as in the earlier briefing, e.g. with instructions to briefing managers - see over.)

The scheme is presented as ordered, controlled and sensible. The company has a firm grasp of the reins; has planned and prepared and is guiding the thing for the benefit of all. The extension of the scheme is presented as a "logical development". Note too the use of expressions like 'plans have already been made' and "our objective". Participation is wrapped round with the familiar language of 'the company', in its formal manifestation this is the language of senior management. Participation is made to appear subservient to the will of management. It is made to appear as if management have, and always have had, a meticulous control over the nature and development of the scheme. The document achieves managerialness: it displays managerialness, which is the organisational

IM/Kal

COMMUNICATION TO ALL EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: WORKER PARTICIPATION - COMMUNICATION IN DRY PRODUCTS AREA

In October ****, employees were told of plans to form a Participation Group of the Packaging area with the continuing assistance of Professor I. Hamming and Dr. H. Kirknatch.

A logical development from the work to-date is the creation of a Participation Group in the Dry Products area. It has been agreed that this will begin in late September, and will be closely followed by the formation of the first Divisional Group covering most of Pharmaceutical Production. Plans have already been made to form the first departmental group outside Pharmaceutical Production in Engineering and this will take place early in ****. Our experience to-date in the chemical and packaging areas has shown the very diverse nature of different groups and this has been reflected in the relatively slow progress which has been made to-date. Our objective in **** to evolve a company wide net-work of groups in twelve months was, in retrospect, too optimistic.

Professor Hamming and Dr. Kirknatch will explain the proposals in more detail to employees in the Dry Products area late in September. At the same time they will be discussing with employees the type of issues which are relevant to the Participation Group. It is intended to hold the first meeting of the new group early in October.

The successful creation of a new group and a wider application of Participative Management within the Company depends to a considerable degree of the whole-hearted support of staff at all levels. It is evident that up to the present date in the areas where Participation Groups are operating that there has been an improvement in communications and a better understanding of other people's problems.

What was said in **** is still valid. The Company has and will continue to encourage the discussion of individual and work problems in a frank and open climate. This will complement rather than detract from the activities of the Participation Group.

In a number of departments informal groups, where matters associated with work are discussed, have continued to function and these will be encouraged. It seems likely that in many cases these informal activities could be converted into a more formal approach with limited modification.

J.MacHEATH

10th August, ****.

obligation of communiques of this type. The contingent, tentative and at times haphazard progress of the scheme is 'cleaned-up'. Despite admissions of over-optimism and slow progress participation is shown to have been handled with competence, with traditional orderliness and logicality that is the proposed motif of management activity, and of course, its public justification.

Paragraph four is blackmail. Participation is no longer referred to as an experiment with the connotations of potential temporariness and trial thus enabling its termination and a reversion to the status quo ante. Rather, here its continuation is made contingent on the support and commitment of the workforce. The company is doubtless aware of the current frustration and of the desire of those taking part to see it extended to a site wide scheme where, it is supposed, more substantial topics can be approached. If people want this, and it is assumed that they do, then they must be supportive of the development of the scheme through intermediate stages. The workforce are being seduced into being drawn unreservedly into the process. They are being made responsible indirectly for the future of the project. What is on offer as an inducement is improved communications and "a better understanding of other people's problems". Participation is proffered as a means of improving things. 'Improvement' is opted for here instead of 'change' or 'progress'. Improvement suggests change but inserts a more overtly positivistic connotation. But in other respects the definition here is not much of an advance from those preliminary definitions offered to the packaging group. The association of participation and communication is still very much to the foreground. It is still that very low-key relationship that confines participation to a narrow range of possible influence and corrals the meanings of participation within a reduced

arrangement of other relationships, some of which were encountered earlier. Participation is also associated here with a "better understanding of other peoples' problems". This is a slightly new formulation although it relates linearly with past efforts. It inhabits the same areas as, say, 'cooperation', as 'sharing', of a coming together to deal with problems of mutual interest. It trades on those assumed shared values of community, of caring for the difficulties of ones neighbours and colleagues. It says 'we all work in the same place, we all face various problems, the solution to those problems is to the benefit of us all'. It taps those values of fair play where it is moral to hear the other side of the story. We all have a story to tell; our stories are valid if you listen to them. We are all in the same boat; everyone of us. Two heads are better than one. Fraternity. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

In some ways there is the hint of a management defensiveness here. There is a plea: 'you may think that management are to blame for the ills of the company; you may think that management have life easy and that you have all the difficulties. But if you look you will see that we have problems too; that we are bound by things beyond our control. If you could recognise our problems you might not blame us so much. Our problems justify our actions. When you suffer it is not our malice, it is the result of us coming to terms with our problems. If you could see that you would understand and even help us'.

In the next paragraph there is a direct affirmation of the meanings projected in the early stages. The position has not really changed despite the struggles in the packaging and the chemical departments, despite the emergence of numerous fresh meanings over

the intervening period. Still the talk here is of 'individual' problems and the rhetoric of 'frank and open' treatment of those problems. The talk of frankness and openness as a representation of existing company culture careers violently into the impressions of company culture provided by the workforce in my discussions with them. Fear, anxiety, apathy, frustration and 'black-eyes' is the language of the shop-floor. More interestingly perhaps, is that participation is again made a supplement to the existing arrangements in the company, however misconceived. Participation, despite other offered relationships, is not a newness, it does not cause a transmutation of existing arrangements. Rather it is incorporated into the establishment, integrated and thereby controlled. Participation is a mere supplement to that which already exists and works. As a supplement it is not an alternative or a replacement; it does not supplant what is already there but is merely grafted on to it. It is not subversive but a pleasant addition to the status quo; the icing on the cake.

The last paragraph merely restates and strengthens the preceding one. Extent practices are valued and participations' supplementariness reaffirmed. There is little that needs to be done to existing procedures and practices for participation to be fully and comfortably accomodated.

Most of the indications are that managements definitions of participation had not moved significantly from the early days. At least not in their public announcements. Conversations with some of the senior managements staff who had been directly involved did reveal that they had shifted ground to some degree, and indeed some of the meanings circulating amongst senior management were more varied and

complex than at earlier times. However in the formal presentation of participation, in its marketing, there were very few major changes to the central definitions being put forward.

Restricting Choice

The first major contact with the Dry Products staff occured in March when the consultants and the division director undertook to brief the area supervisors, and shortly after, the rest of the department. The director took the initial responsibility to present the supervisors with the company version of participation. He came armed with the slide-show the managing director had developed that I have referred to previously. The substance of that display had not altered appreciably, but some of the running commentary revealed some subtle recasting.

Kerrick: "A lot of people talk about participation without really knowing what it means, and I include myself here. But what I think it means on this site is generally trying to get people involved in things that are going on.
If we look at these slides it might help.. (puts up slide) (briefly explains the slides and the plans behind them).
"But it's flexible...each department needs to work out what suits them best. It's not easy, we've made slow progress, but it's a learning experience for everyone.
....it's not a substitute for normal supervisory channels... We've had some frustrations. We've spent a lot of time on some issues and not all of them have been resolved to everyone's satisfaction. But overall the record is good. There are some problems, until the scheme is developed site-wide, with some issues."
(A supervisor raises the question of unpaid leave).
"Well, yes, the issue was raised by the packaging group, but no decisions could be made there. It was passed on to the staff group...they came to some conclusions, not packaging.

There are issues like this and the one you refer to (a supervisor had referred to a related grievance of his own) that are getting raised, but there is no room for decisions to be made. The important thing is that by extending it, this group too can put their point of view forward. I mean, you've been moaning that you're underprivilege that you couldn't contribute; but now you'll be privilege and, I tell you now people will get on at you for being privilege
(Some supervisors suggest that the scheme has had some negative consequences and that it has not had any successes - he asks for some examples).
(Kerrick is a little flustered) "Uhh... Well, there are many we could tell you about... Uhm...for example, being paid on Thursday, lounge facilities etc. Anyway the important thing is to get closer to the issues..to get some sort of agreement. You never get total agreement, but then life just isn't like that is it? It won't solve everything...but we hope it will create a more civilised atmosphere... that does seem to have happened in some areas."
(He talks about an improved atmosphere in the chemical area. But the supervisors still press for a concrete demonstration of success.)
"O.K. I tell you what I'll do, I'll bring in a list of resolved issues at the next supervisory meeting."

Kirknatch: "Yes, but there is an important difference. You can't show the differences in relationships, in the atmosphere etc."

Kerrick: "Some of the issues might not seem important to you, they may seem trivial to us but the important things is that the issue was important to them..., and to have it discussed means something to them."

Macheath: "The success or failure of a group will depend on frankness. You've got to try and achieve a level of openness and frankness.
There must be no black-eyes.
Participation won't guarantee agreement. But people are beginning to at least be able to see the issue through other peoples' eyes. It's a question of a change in dialogue, a change in the style in which we talk to each other."

> "Participation is not a substitute to normal supervisory activity - it's complementary. Also, individuals learn another approach in the formal setting which they may carry over into their normal working relationships."

There is much here that will already be familiar to the reader. Many of the meanings derived from this interaction are of the same kind as those presented by management before. Kerrick again talks of getting people involved; there is talk once again about 'discussions', and so on. As already stated the slide show was repeated again here and does not need further comment. I have stressed throughout how the plans for the scheme were invariably worked out in advance by the management elite. When Sherry became managing director he quickly worked on a formal structure for the development of the scheme graphically represented by the pyramids of the slide show. The scheme had a tendency to be evaluated on the basis of the degree to which what emerged conformed to these plans. There had been some tension between the consultants who desired a looser more evolutionary structure and the managing director and his acolytes who seemed keen to press ahead and implement his structure. Thus there is talk of the need to develop a system that suits each department whilst at the same time plans are being made and drawn up that plots the course of the scheme over the next two or so years, and in which the overall plan is clear in the discourse of the senior managers. There is much <u>public talk</u> of the structure and procedures not yet being decided, of the need to be gradualist and contingent and the responsiveness of the scheme to the demands and needs of individual departments, whilst in conference rooms and offices relatively <u>firm plans</u> are being drawn up and decisions made. Steering group minutes and other company documents reveal this to be the case.

The progress of the scheme, its overall shape and most of its procedures as they actually came to be, were pre-figured quite clearly in previous managerial discourse.

At this meeting the same rhetoric was employed, with assertions that there was no 'blue-print' and that it may turn out that people don't actually want to take part. The members are assured that the structure to emerge will be the result of the discussions with them. But as one supervisor pointedly comments:

> Supervis.: "But you are still dictating to some extent - if we say we don't want it then we are still on the outside. Even if we say we don't want it we will still have to be governed by the decisions made by other groups."

Such comments reveal most starkly the paradoxes of participation in this type of situation. As participation becomes institutionalised then many issues that impinge on working relations might receive increasing consideration through that mechanism, those excluded from the scheme (be it by choice or otherwise) are thereby further excluded from any involvement in matters that affect their working environment. The choice is a severely restricted one. It is not, in reality, a choice between participation and retaining things as they are. To not take part is to risk being even more excluded than before; to be subject to the will of even more groups and individuals. There is not much real choice in the form participation takes either. Given the admitted and obvious definitional vacuum amongst the shop-floor, and the way participation is presented by management and the consultants, it is perhaps not surprising that the scheme that emerges matches quite closely the elaborated plans of senior management.

Kerrick again emphasises that participation does not replace existing supervisory channels. It is made clear from the start that participation is not intended as a means of challenging the traditional hierarchical organisation of the company. It is not, in any fundamental sense, an alternative to extant arrangements. Rather it is a supplement; an addition that compliments, not subverts, long-standing practices and structures. The point is made by Kerrick and then strongly reinforced by Macheath. The supervisors, like other groups present no challenge at this stage to that notion. There is some sense of people being generally wary of change and there being some ready comfort in the expression of continuity.

It is interesting to note that Kerrick talks about the unpaid leave issue in a way that largely supports the stance of the workforce whilst linking it to a persuasive point about the need for these new members to be involved so that such issues can be tackled more effectively. His talk is an intertext of the sort of discourse developing in the packaging group where they had begun to question the right of management to take issues away from the group and to make decisions alone. But it also reflects that talk that sells participation as the only means by which issues of that kind can be dealt with: only if all become commited to what the company is offering will that type of issue be dealt with by the membership. (Note the communique to the workforce produced above). However there is no mention of the extension meaning that the membership will then be in a position to make decisions on that type of issue. All Kerrick is offering is the opprotunity for the group to "put their point of view forward".

A further part of the 'sale' is the association of participation with priviledge. Participation is a priviledge, granted,

presumably, by the benevolent management. Think of the difference of meaning in this context if privilege were replaced paradigmatically by, say, 'right'. Participation is a gift. Gifts require gratitude. And you don't kick the proverbial gift horse in the mouth.

In the next paragraph, Kerrick avoids the pressure relating to the demonstrable benefits and successes (for which the workforce might be grateful). Results of a concrete nature are not as important as less tangible ones. The important thing is that issues are discussed and that the right kind of 'civilised atmosphere' is created. 'Civilised' indexes that alignment of meanings around participation encountered earlier where it is related to sensible debate, to rational, non-emotional discussion, to an awareness of both sides of the argument, to a diminuation of a 'them-and-us' attitude, to a sharing of common purposes and difficulties. It demands a rationalistic response, with an emphasis on the supposed values of fair-play and a blind eye turned to the realities of an inequitable power structure. In other ways it is an admonishment to behave in managerial ways, or at least the managerial ways embodied in this company; where personal challenges are minimised and where people are not seen to 'rock the boat'. It denies participation as a site of conflict, of a battle fought over issues of sectional interest. It denies space to those meanings of participation which define it as a forum for confrontation, and where personalised attacks are permissable.

In the same vein are Macheath's familiar comments about the need for 'openness' and 'frankness'. It should be remembered that the audience here are supervisors, and thus have some authority over the lower echelons of the shop-floor. The relations between participation and openness and frankness echo those humanistic,

individualistic and liberal conceptions that seek a better world in the utopia of morally responsible individuals who are able to free themselves from the debilitating fear of open expression, who habitually tell the truth unafraid and are able to fully "realise themselves and their potential". Organisational problems are questions of, individual souls and psyches, of personal underdevelopment and a lack of moral rectitude. There is the aspiration and the belief that once all parties understand the true position of others and can appreciate their problems, and once those issues can be confronted openly, then all devisiveness, either potential or actual, would be comprehended, accepted and ultimately done away with. But as we have seen it only serves to shift the level of the grievance and the focus of the division. Once it is realised that Cyril, say, acts as he does, not necessarily because he is Cyril, but because he is a section-head, then the nature of the confrontation merely shifts ground. Once Cyril explains to his workforce that he is bound by order and pressures from other levels, then the debate shifts to the actions and responsibilities of these other levels. Seeing problems as other people see them does not necessarily solve the problem or its causes. It is true to say that in some regard the revelation of different perspectives had proved constructive, in other instances it simply refocused the problem and in some ways exacerbated it. The realisation that responsibility for certain malpractices does not lie with Cyril but higher up the organisational hierarchy does not ensure that the problem disspates or that the workforce are consoled or the possibility of confrontation is necessarily lessened.

Kerrick ends the session with the same kind of self-effacing comment that he began it with; but still trying to demonstrate his support.

Kerrick: "To be frank, I would be disappointed if it was rejected here. It's a question of trying it and seeing how it goes and fitting it to our needs. I had some apprehensions myself when it started, because I.... Uhh...well I had some things to overcome."

Pushing Participation

After that meeting and some informal ones with the area management, the responsibility for introducing the scheme to the shop-floor fell to the consultants to a large extent. Much of the initial reaction of the shop-floor to these early meetings has already been included in an earlier section (II: 2). There was not much difference between this department and the packaging group. There was perhaps a shade more scepticism and a little less apathy. It was from this group that many comments were made about the motives and intentions of the management, and of the role of the consultants. There was a widespread suspicion that the company were merely trying to avoid union involvement on site and that they were being forced by some external forces to, against their will and natural inclination, introduce a scheme of some sort. In the discussions the consultants had to defend their impartiality and try and engender a more positive response.

As with previous groups the consultants confined their overt presentation of the scheme to some brief introductory comments. Most of the time at the briefing sessions were occupied with a dialogue in which the consultants answered fears, doubts and tried to overcome scepticism and apathy; and with listening and responding to the familiar tirade of grievances of a varied nature. As the consultants noted at the time, the membership were bringing to the fore numerous

reasons against the idea and spirit of participation whilst at the same time making it clear that they had a large number of complaints that they wanted airing.

Kirknatch held sessions with most operative groups in the area. Much of the discussions was taken up with the organisational need to get members opinions on the type and number of representation. However Kirknatch made a number of points about participation generally. In the first instance, although he declared that the structure of the scheme had not been decided and that the operatives here had an input into how the scheme developed, it became obvious in the discussions that there were some very fixed options. It had become such an integral part of most people's operating definitions that there would be formal meetings at, about, monthly intervals, attended by representatives from the different levels of the department. At one point Kirknatch stated that he had come down to get ideas on representation, but it was never suggested that representation itself come under question. Some of the operatives did make queries about the nature of representation: some questioned whether there needed to be representatives from each level of the hierarchy; some were prepared for those from another level to represent them; others could not see why all line management had to be present and suggested that the scheme would be 'top-heavy'. However there was no serious questioning of the general type of structure that the consultants and senior management had in mind and had instigated elsewhere. The structure of participation in the dry products area as it turned out did not deviate from the general structure of other departments.

Other presentations of the definitions of participation occured in dialogue with the operatives and in response to questioning

about various concrete aspects of participation Kirknatch reiterated some familiar associations. He stressed, for instance, the need to develop a degree of trust. He linked this with the view of participation that valorizes the coming together of two sides in a constructive way, and the resolution of problems of mutual concern. He concurred, however, with an operative who asserted that people operated on self-interest and went further to suggest that you could not run participation unless it was based on self-interest. Kirknatch put it to the operative that he might be able to serve his self interest best via the auspices of participation. The operative was doubtful.

Part of what the consultants had to offer was not just communication improvements, but the possibility of obtaining more 'influence' for the operatives. He did, however, suggest that the move towards greater influence took time and was fraught with difficulties. He was at pains to point out that, although as far as he was concerned there was no bar on what could be discussed, it was a 'fact of life' that management could refuse to talk about things if they so desired. They were urged to recognise the reality of the power of management to ultimately veto the discussions and to make unilateral decisions. He did stress that they could at least get their views heard and would be in a better position to get 'reasons' for decisions from management.

Despite making clear some of the limitations of participation, the consultants were clearly keen to promote the scheme, and were to some extent in the business of selling the idea to the operatives: as the following exchange illustrates.

Operative: "What do you think of it.....of participation in other places on site?"

Kirknatch: "Well I think we've achieved a lot."

Operative: "What like?"

Kirknatch: "There have been a number of substantive things....(gives a couple of examples).. then there was the question of when people wanted to be paid...."

Operative: "I wasn't asked about that"

Kirknatch: (triumphantly) "That's because you weren't participating."

In the broadest terms the discourse of this group of workers did not differ substantially from that of the packaging group. There were some minor differences of tone. On the whole this group was less characterised by the proliferation of 'gripes' on matters of working conditions and practices. They seemed more prepared to talk about wider issues and to seek to settle minor grievances, as they occured, on the shop-floor. They were very concerned about the type of issues that were seen as legitimate for a participation group to discuss. There had been some non-commissioned interventions from middle-management, for there was a widespread opinion amongst the membership that certain categories of issue had already been ruled out. They were under the firm impression, for instance that they could not talk about money or job grading.

Operative: "We can't talk about money on this group. Money's very important. Everything else is secondary."

Kirknatch: "Well, you can raise anything...but you must be prepared...management may refuse to talk."

Operative: "Huh...where's the participation in that?"

This group too had major complaints about the lack of communication from above. They also complained bitterly that whenever they raised an issue nothing was done about it. They asserted, like past groups, that issues were blocked and filtered by line management and that legitimate issues were being pushed aside, overlooked and lost. There was the same sense of apathy generated by long standing frustration that had also been a feature in other areas. 'Nothing was done' was the condemnation and the view that led to a scepticism that participation would not offer anything different. There were doubts expressed about the motives of management in introducing such a scheme. A feeling that they would not be prepared to change things unless it suited them. This feature of their discourse was bolstered by persistent rumours and opinion that things in the other participation groups had not gone very well. It was suggested that people in the other groups did not report favourably in relation to participation. It was claimed that the exercise was not widely viewed as a success. That management invariably got their own way and that things they did not want to discuss were shut off.

The line managers in this department were seemingly less resistent and cautious about participation than their counterparts in packaging and the chemical group. They seemed to accept what was happening with a laissez faire attitude. They were not in the least obstructionist and cooperated with the consultants fully. They seemed happy to accept unquestioningly the dictat of their seniors that participation would take place in their department. None of them expressed strong views in either direction. All were vaguely in favour of what was taking place. Whether the support was genuine, whether they were under some misapprehension of what it might entail, or whether they had been more fully primed by senior management or

their colleagues in other departments, was not clear. It must be noted that someone in the department at management level had suggested to the membership that participation was not about debating wages.

Support, Warnings And Critique: The Training Session

An important feature of the re-presentation of participation centred on the 'training session' held for the newly elected representatives for the dry products area. Once again the session was largely conducted by the consultants with the assistance of Macheath. The format was the same as for the packaging reps. First they were given an introduction by P. Sherry followed by an exploration of the concerns and anxieties of the reps. This was followed by the addition of some of the reps. from both the Chemical and the packaging group. Lastly the dry products reps. itemised some issues and placed them in order of priority with the assistance of the consultants.

The presentation of Mr. Sherry followed well trodden paths. Once again the ubiquitous slides reappeared as Sherry went for the 'big sell'. He began by providing some historical background. It was maintained that the reasons for the company's interest was a concern "to improve communications and to prepare for any legislation in relation to participation."

Sherry: "Participation as far as Tridy is concerned means more involvement of the individual at all levels, in things that affect them. It was important for us that we gradually evolved the way we wanted. We took it slow and kept control. We didn't want to work to a blue-print worked out in advance. We wanted to do things in our own style; that would suit the way we do things in this company.
It's important to recognise that participation does not cut across the normal way of doing things...the normal supervisory chains etc."

There is little that is new in the content of this presentation. There is perhaps a greater emphasis on the gradualist, evolutionary, non-blue-print approach adopted. The talk here firmly and directly reflects the discourse of the consultants and their quasi-theoretical notions of the implementation of organisational change. Some comment has already been made about the relations of meaning around that type of definition. For instance the contrast between the present 'evolutionary' and the absent 'revolutionary'; and between the rhetoric of contingent, and emergent structure, and the formal presentation of graphic structure and the inescapable press for its implementation.

It is interesting to note that the managing director is honest in presenting the fear of the intervention of government legislation as a reason for the company's involvement. This is tied in with the association that the company has kept sensible logical control and has escaped the confines of an imposed blue-print. Unprepared for government (or other) intervention, is cast as an unwanted intrusion into the ways 'we do things'. Note too the reference to communication and the linking of participation with established practices, with the oft repeated suggestion that participation does not interfere with existing channels of control.

Sherry goes on to talk of the "experiment" in the chemical plant and how that provided a framework for examination. The whole scheme is here wrapped in the language of good organisational rationality, order and control. The company always had a firm grasp of what was going on and was able to manipulate the scheme to suit organisational purposes. The hint now though, is that the 'experiment' is over and that the company is commited irrevocably to embarking on participation in earnest.

Representatives from all levels come together to "discuss items of agreed interest", he goes on to suggest. Issues that are either 'work related' or 'people related'; (not 'policy related' or 'administration related' or 'power related') Familiar territory still.

He puts up the 'pyramid slides' relating to the expansion of the scheme.

Sherry: "When we realised that things were moving at least in some positive directions..... but it's not all rosy though, there were problems, I won't kid you, and there always will be. But generally we felt that it had been worthwhile. Communication has improved...and if you asked people they would probably say that they felt more involved."
(He again makes reference to 'priviledge', and to the frustrations because it is not yet site-wide.)
(He concludes with some rousing comments of which the following give the flavour.)
"So we get some involvement in the decision-making."

"There is a learning period for all of us.. it certainly has been for me."

"It is still an experiment...but we are still moving ahead and moving forward in a positive direction I think."

"I'm very committed to participation... I've been involved from the start."

"I hope it will improve communication and give people the opportunity to get involved in things that are dear to them....things related to the workplace."

Again there are some recognisable themes here: communication, involvement, priviledge, learning. He refers to the assessment of the scheme to date. I have already commented that their seemed to be no clear policy on the criteria for the evaluation of the progress of the scheme. There had appeared to be more concern that the structure

of the scheme be established according to the plan. Here he suggests that communication has improved and that people do feel more involved. It is fortunate that these perceived changes correspond to the proposed definition of what participation is supposed to mean. His evaluation is lacking in any supporting evidence. Certainly it is not well born out by the comments of representatives and operatives to me. The evaluation is controlled and owned by the senior management, they are the arbiters of whether the scheme is successful or not; they control the means by which any such assessment can be made.

Earlier in the same presentation he had intimated that the experimental stage had now been passed, now he states that it is, in fact still experimental. This is, of course, associated with the last point. He and his managers have control over the progress and status of the scheme. They have the right to specify that it is an experiment or otherwise. They claim the power to determine whether or not the experiment has succeeded and thus decide if it is to continue, cease or change status. As 'experiment', participation is still not fully assimilated into the status quo; it is still tentative, still different, still uninitiated. The threat of the possible withdrawal of participation is still there. The operatives have already been told that the success of participation depends upon their full committment.

Sherry asserts his personal involvement. He states that he is very committed to participation (at least the version he proposes) and that he has learnt from the experience of being involved. The approval of the managing director stamps the project with the official seal of approval of the company. Given some of the operatives speculations about the committment of senior management and their

expressed wish to get issues out of their own departments to a higher level, such assertions might have been taken as a strong selling point. Such personalised statements, particularly where Sherry avers that he too has learnt, makes an addition to those associations that have participation as a coming together, as a common sharing of problems: an exploitation of communitas.

After his display, Sherry made his exit leaving the two consultants with the shop-floor reps. Again the form and style of the meeting followed that of the packaging group. This group seemed more at ease and confident. Indeed there were some older men on the group some of whom had been involved in company committees in the past. There was less anxiety among the group about the possible tensions with their supervision as a result of their new role. There were some expressions about the possibility of black eyes, but it did not appear to be as much a preoccupation as with previous groups. As one of the reps. put it 'you shouldn't be afraid to speak'. The issue of tackling sensitive issues was discussed:

Mark:	"We would probably all be quite straight forward with the people we immediately work with...but higher up... I mean they certainly aren't always direct."
Kirknatch:	"I agree; it may be important that you may need to be devious at some of these meetings."
Josh:	"No, you shouldn't need to...you should be able to speak openly and truthfully... with a free mind."

Clearly there were some rather mixed feelings, although the overall atmosphere was more relaxed and confident.

The above comments by Josh, one of the older members already referred to, reveal an open, almost idealistic attitude. A belief that right and truth will be out and will win the day. Ultimately such views, which were not isolated, colludes with those other expressions of participation as a sharing of problems in a spirit of mutuality and reciprocity. Kirknatch's suggestion of deviousness was not seen to be in the mould of participation as defined by some of this group at the time.

The consultants continued to urge the reps. to conform to the view that things should be kept at a low key initially. There were familiar exhortations to 'play it cool' to be non-combative, to avoid personal attacks and so on. It was suggested by Macheath and Kirknatch that there were 'ways' of approaching 'sensitive' issues. The members were advised to be circumspect, to avoid being aggressive. Participation was set out as non-confrontive. They were being asked to cooperate; but with what and with whom? Whose purposes, exactly, were being served by this softly, softly approach? After some initial disinclination the reps. indicated that they were prepared to accept the advice. Besides, they disclosed that they found their relations with their line managers more acceptable and less frought than the packaging members. They did expect, though, that participation would have some bearing on that relationship:

> Josh: "There has always been a division between top and bottom, you can't change that overnight....it might take a few years."

After some brief inaugural discussion the group was joined by representatives from both the Chemical Group and the Packaging Group. These included Michael and Harold from Chemical, and Peter and Pauline from Packaging. As with the packaging training session,

these members were there to put their impression of the scheme to date: they had not been briefed by either management or the consultants; as far as I know. Hamming invited the old reps. to give some of their experiences and knowledge; "warts and all". The following exchange gives some idea of the tone of this exercise.

Mark: "Do you think it has been worthwhile?"

Harold: "Yes, definitely. But I want to say that... if you have an issue to bring up make sure it's got a foundation.
Also you need to pursue it...you've got to keep at it, or they may drop it.
It's not merely for trivial things, simple things, that should be worked out somewhere else."

Mark: "But everyone's important...it might be important to someone."

Michael: "Yes, but small issues should be sorted out locally...through the use of normal procedures."

Harold: "Don't get the two mixed up....on the one hand it's an individuals personal grievance, on the other there may be issues that the group as a whole dislike or disagree with.
....
You've got to ensure that the discussion goes as deep as you want it, or it may get dropped."

Mark: "Is that a problem."

Harold: "Initially....we had lots of small problems, lot of things on the agenda, we were jumping around all the time. It's better to have a few and then keep at it."

Hamming: "That's a difference between the two groups. The chemical group pursue things, they don't let them drop - the packaging group tend to let things go - accept answers too easily."

Peter: "Yes, initially we accepted answers easily. You have to get into the swing of keeping things going. You need to get things out in the open, they've got to get solved sometime."

Once again the Chemical group in particular are very supportive of the scheme and very positive. Much of what is said indexes some of the difficulties both groups have encountered and that have been revealed in previous sections. It reflects an increasing awareness of the need to be in control of what they are trying to achieve, to take a meta-perspective on their own procedures and to optimise their efforts. For some the realisation that they need to be proactive was a difficult lesson to learn. Implicitly it identifies managerial intransigence and inertia and thus highlights the need for a positive activist posture from the reps.

There is a certain congruence between the discourse of the experienced reps. here and the discourse of management/consultants. There is the recognition of the value and continuation of normal procedures. This affirmation of the status quo is partially a reflection of the feeling that participation should deal with weightier issues. It occupies the same space as the growth of the view that participation requires a constructive approach where issues of mutual concern can be tackled in a 'civilised' way. It also indexes more pragmatically the discovery by the reps. that they were failing to expedite issues effectively because too often they became bogged down with a morass of relatively minor issues. It may also be the case that the managerial rhetoric that sought to incorporate participation into existing arrangements and to perpetuate and extol traditional procedures, had been effective. Participation is not revolutionary in that it does not supplant the current system but becomes merely an adjunct to it; a prop even (?).

There are warnings here from the old hands: there is still a veneer of a cooperative effort between the two sides, but the language

belies this. The reps. implicitly point to the battle with the management, of the need to keep pressurising if progress is to be made. The shop-floor reps. make it clear that the onus is on them, they must push management if they are to achieve what they want. Management are likely to allow issues to die. There is not a direct suggestion of confrontation or of management being deliberately manipulative or obstructivist, rather the blame is partially attributed to the poor organisation of the reps. themselves. The pressuring and tenacity of the chemical group is identified by Hamming as one of the differences between the more experienced Chemical group and the novices of the packaging group.

On the whole the chemical group were more supportive and enthusiastic about the scheme than either Peter or Pauline, although neither of those two were sharply negative. Harold, for instance, was prepared to accept the validity of the attempts by management to define certain issues as site-wide. As Michael put it:

> Michael: "Some issues may involve Tridy Industries, so they can't be solved at your level - they may have to be shelved. Or they may be site issues - they will have to be shelved until the thing spreads."

The reps. are still, to an extent, operating on the promises for the future. They hope that they will be in a position to influence and tackle more substantial issues at a later date. This is reinforced by the consultants exhortations that 'things take time', and that the Chemical group are displaying a sense of reality and good sense when they recognise that. Patience and an acceptance of inertia are recognised as virtues. The Chemical reps. are being positioned as bearers of the wisdom of participation. They are commended for exhibiting the right values of patience, doggedness and a collusion

not to rock the boat. Macheath, too supports this positioning, and he praises the Chemical group for their acceptance. He contrasts them with the less wise, more impatient packaging group.

The Chemical group are supportive in other, more direct ways. They illustrate some of the achievements they think they have attained. They refer to a number of substantive issues that have been resolved, but also make reference to the effect they perceive participation having on the management-worker relationship.

Harold: "You don't get the threatening, authoritarian managers which we had before - we don't get that now."

And later when the discussion turns to the role of the rep. in relation to their membership, the same affirmation is made.

Sonia: "What happens if you get a disagreement in your own group?"

Harold: "Well try and get it all together - get an agreement. If they see indecisions and you divided they'll just let you get on with it."

Peter: "It's different for you. You don't have different groups with different interests. It's OK amongst the reps., they can talk to each other properly and sort things out - it's more difficult with the people on the floor. It seems that they won't change overnight, it takes time and effort."

Harold: "If you fight among yourselves, then you've got problems. Also if you take on individuals. I mean the supervisors are... sort of authoritarian aren't they - we've... you've got to be able to change them eventually, to be able to talk to <u>them</u> properly too. We had one over there who was a self styled Hitler to be honest..."

Peter: (interrupting) "Things do change gradually - we had one who wouldn't even pass the time of day, but he's starting to change."

Harold: "....I didn't think it was possible to change that one."

But there are voices of dissension:

Pauline: "I don't think we've changed that much."

Harold: "We took twelve months and we got nowhere ....but he, he's been a different man since."

Michael: "We are here to help things change more quickly...to pass on our help."

Some of this exchange subtly introduces the anxieties that we know some of the reps. have. There is talk that reflects that movement towards greater group cohesion and solidarity amongst the reps. There is the talk that intimates the divisions that build up between the reps. and those they represent, and the inertia and resistence of the membership. There are, too, further hints that the relations within the group are not as relaxed as some other talk tends to suggest. There is a sense of them-and-us still apparent in the language despite the recognition that some of the line managers have changed - slowly. But there is still an overlying positive tone, at least at the surface. Things have changed, albeit very slowly and not without a great deal of effort and perseverence.

In another positive illustration the chemical reps. refer to the fact that when plant and machinery changes are in hand they get to see the plans early on and are able to comment. They suggest that they have had a hand in some of the design or at least been asked to grant their approval. In the same vein they exploit and refer to that view in which participation is said to better utilise the untapped talents of the workforce. It will be recalled that this was amongst the meanings of participation presented by management earlier on. But once again there is not absolute equanimity. Peter reveals some counterpositions by suggesting that:

Peter: "We've had situations before where we could have got involved - but then things get tagged site-wide and we don't get the opportunity."

Mark: "You don't get the opportunity?"

Peter: "Well...(Macheath tries to intervene and begins to speak, but he is prevented from doing so by Hamming who invites Peter to finish.)...well not yet...but I think we can still pursue it."

Hamming: What about you Pauline?"

Carol: "Well there have been a lot of problems... a lot of the girls still think it's a waste of time. I often felt like packing it in, but...(laughs) I'm still here. I think it is getting better. It's important to pick carefully a few things for the agenda."

Macheath's attempted intervention was significant on this occasion. Peter seemed to be heading towards a marked cricisism of the scheme, in contrast to some of the more glowing references being provided by the Chemical people, but he became aware of Macheath's disquiet, and aware that he was going against the grain. Despite Hamming's attempt to give him the room to present his views, there is an element of Peter backing off following Macheath's interjection. Some of Peter's views expressed to me privately, as revealed in the preceding sections, show that he had a range of cogent and constructive criticisms to make. These did not surface fully at this meeting. He seemed reluctant to give full rein to his anxiety, especially when it became apparent that it would not meet with the pleasure of Macheath. There was an air of collusion not to rock the boat: that sobriety and caution that is a feature of the managerial culture of the company. Pauline, too, seemed to take the hint provided by Macheath and toned down some of the criticism she may have had. In the dynamic of the meeting there was a subtle coercive and pervasive atmosphere of

presenting a positive and supportive front in relation to participation that appeared difficult to counter. This is not to suggest that the enthusiasm of the chemical group was not genuine, rather that, in conjunction with the presence of the personnel manager and the consultants, and the purpose of the meeting, their language tended to hem-in packaging reps. who seemed obliged to follow the tone set. The serious doubts and criticisms and frustrations expressed more privately did not readily surface in this context.

However the interaction developed, and the movement by Peter was not left unattended to. Harold responded by hedging his positivism to the extent that Peter had watered down his negativism.

Harold: "It is all very tight - I mean, everybody knows everybody else - at the meetings it is hard to avoid some confrontation.... things did get very heated. I think everyone gets to the stage when they say 'sod participation' and feel like jacking it in...but you've got to keep going. Now I feel we have won - I think we have got somewhere - now at least our problems are discussed properly. I mean take this morning. This morning every single person from Chemical Plant group came with the same idea - from the operatives to top management, - you'd never think you'd get like that, but we did, right up to Mike Kerrick."

Michael: "Yes, we seem to get on better...we get more done too. We can talk about anything with management...the word 'no' in the worker participation thing is taboo."

Harold: "Yes, I mean Jack (the section head) has learnt that and accepts it. The difference with him now is that he now believes that participation works. He is the one who, if there is a new design, he brings it forward and gets comments etc."

Not surprisingly Macheath is quick to add his voice to this extremely positive input. He makes another strategic intervention, this time

to reinforce what is being said, and to give it his seal of approval. Interventions of this type consolidate and push on the momentum of the dialogue.

Macheath: "It's hard work, let's not pretend that it isn't - Harold and Michael have had some real problems - but they have kept on and now they are seeing some benefits."

Harold: "I think we've had a lot. Take that BUPA issue...I know a lot of people say that it was on the cards anyway...but I honestly think it came out of participation."

'Now I feel we have won' is an extremely strong statement of support, despite the fact that its own rhetoric tends to undercut itself. Much of Harold's talk is of the cooperation that has developed; he, as much as management, values the common sharing of common-issues that is said to be central to participation, and yet even at a moment when his praise is highest for those values and their achievement, he employes the metaphors of battle. "We have won"; he declares: who has won? and against what, or whom? The language that masquerades as sharedness and cooperation, the demise of the 'them-and-us' syndrome, cannot, apparently hide the other language of combat and confrontation; the language of struggle and power, of dominance and subordination.

The 'victory' is assessed on some criteria presumably; but the criteria of the shop-floor seems as unspecified as that of management. However they seem to match in terms of evaluation, some of those presented definitions of management that have become so familiar by now. They are said to have got 'somewhere'; that 'somewhere' turns out to be the old favourite of 'at least things are discussed properly'. Harold and Michael see the achievement of the ability to 'discuss' as significant, as something attained. They have learnt

to evaluate the scheme on those criteria that are embodied in the dominant definitions of participation as presented by management and, to a lesser degree the consultants. What is further valued and assessed is the extent to which members of the department agree on issues and come to have common ownership of problems within the department. The 'we are all in this together' sloganising has become a criteria of evaluation for the chemical group reps. They are a happy group of workers working with a common aim and towards a common good...they are more efficient too, note.

Peter finally allows himself to air some of the disquiet he is experiencing, despite the euphoria generated by some of those others present. Finding it difficult to make a counterpoint in juxtaposition to the talk of the chemical group he manufactures a degree of distance by emphasising that his department is different to theirs and faces different problems. It is this difference, once established that allows him some room in which to engage a language that maps out a different ground to that of the chemical group.

Peter: "Our problem is that we are disjointed; we have different interests. We don't confide in each other very much - we may not even understand each others problems. I think we'd like to get together more over some things - but then she (Pauline) has to represent her members and me mine, and if her girls have a certain view, she has to represent that view and I have to represent my mens' views - if those views clash, then me and Pauline will clash.

Michael: "If you clash, that's participation...the thing is, what do you do with that clash?"

The theme is not allowed to develop; Hamming is keen by this stage to draw that phase of the session to a close. But here Peter is beginning to approach some of the issues and definitions that have begun

to exercise him over the preceding months. The theme of group, or at least representative, solidarity, was a recurrent one in his developing language in relation to participation. But his talk here also reflects the realisation that there is some distancing between the reps. and their members. Even if the reps. can establish a working understanding they are bound still to the internicine views of their members. His view begins to lean towards the establishment of a new oligarchy, in which the reps. act on their own initiative and lead the membership. The membership come to be seen as stubborn, old fashioned, and not really aware of what is going on. The reps., on the other hand, are in a 'priviledged' position, they have moved ahead of their colleagues on the shop-floor and have a more informed and progressive appreciation of what is going on. It is encumbent upon them, therefore to take responsibility for leading the way on issues; even acting unilaterally if necessary. A new paternalism is being spawned.

The Representatives Responses

The re-presentation of participation to the dry products group was characterised by some recircling of common and familiar themes, but also by some subtle variations and shifts of emphasis. The early meetings themselves were a similar mixture of established themes with some differences of style and process.

The first few meetings, like those in other areas, were low key affairs. The message from management and the consultants to start off slowly and cautiously were again needed. Confrontation was avoided. Once again the early agendas were littered with relatively uncontentious, 'hygeine' issues that could be handled without too much rancour. The reps. commented later that the meetings struck

them as surprisingly friendly affairs.

Not only the substance of the issues but the manner in which they were presented suggests some definitions of participation that are akin to those operated initially by the reps. in other areas. There was a repeat pattern of the representatives coming to the meetings armed with a list of (relatively) minor grievances from their members which were duly deposited on the laps of the management reps. to be dealt with. It was a re-run of the old passivity in which the issues were given over to management who were expected to provide acceptable solutions. In traditional fashion, management were ceded the responsibility for the control and determination of the issues. The shop-floor reps. were willing to forego ownership of the problem and to relinquish the right to control the decision making process. It was not perceived as a legitimate part of their position to be responsible and accountable for the processing of the issue; they cast themselves as the mere conveyors of issues generated.

Most often each meeting consisted of the shop-floor reps. asking questions of management or of laying out a specific grievance in anticipation of a concrete response. The question form, whilst sometimes a positive tactic, too readily cedes the initiative to the party of whom the question is asked. This is particularly the case if, as was often the case here, the questions are in simple linear form with little backup knowledge or awareness of potential and alternative answers. In other words, the form of the response is at the disposal of the responder to frame as he chooses.

It is partially because of this that management are often in a position to attempt to close an issue off. Once again issues that management were wary of allowing free play, or that they ruled as

'sensitive' were moved out of bounds. The familiar way of achieving this appeared readily amongst the new group; that is, by labelling the issue as site-wide. However, by this stage people involved were already awakened to the potentiality of this ploy. Both the consultants and management, in different ways, made clear to the reps. that such as process could and would occur. Indeed the reps. showed some awareness of what had taken place in other groups and to a degree were already cognisant of the possibility of issues being closed off. A site-wide ruling was not the only means by which management could attempt to fend off an issue they did not want to tackle, or to keep it within the bounds they deemed legitimate. For instance it was not uncommon for a potentially sensitive issue to be hived off to some party external to the committee and/or the department as such, and once out of their direct sphere of influence it would undergo a transmutation and return to the committee in a redefined form. Or there would be an attempt to hand the issue over to some internal expert or notable who was said to have the only capacity to deal with the issue. On other occasions the chairman's control was exploited to contain an issue or to lose it altogether. Reference has already been made to management's control over the means of production and distribution of the mechanisms of information and communication. It was quite feasible for the chairman or some other ranking member to manipulate those to advantage. This would range from the editing of minutes, keeping a keen grip on the generation of the agenda, to a careful handling of the time allocated actually at the meetings. For example on one occasion at least when the meeting was threatening to run over time the chairman would suggest that certain items on the agenda be either postponed or even passed over altogether.

Such procedures were more or less manipulative and tactical, on other occasions issues were differentially defined due to some apparently non-malicious misconceptions. One can only really speculate on the element of design in such circumstances. However, there were occasions when the definition of an issue became extremely problematic because management, deliberately or otherwise, misconceived the true nature of the problem, or conceived of it, and spoke of it, in ways that failed to match that of the other reps. For instance the shop-floor raised an issue concerning the provision of food and drink in the rest area for shift personnel. Initially management defined the issue in terms of the inadequacy of the vending machines in the area, whereas it became clear that what the reps. were concerned to define it as, related to the cooking facilities. The debate became confused in the first place and then management, by introducing this secondary definition, were able to act on it, thereby demonstrating activity and deflecting attention from the real issue. On another occasion the reps. wanted to talk about training opportunities and policies. However, as the exchange developed the issue emerged with the definition that it also involved aspects of job grading. The reps. came to define the issue in such a way that the two sides were indivisible, one could not be considered in isolation from the other. Management, however, persisted in attempting to stick to the definition that suited them, namely that the issue concerned training opportunities only and that it could be handled without reference to grading.

There were differences in the pace of the development of the process in the dry products area compared to, say, packaging. Generally the reps. from the dry products area more rapidly reached some of the important phases and crisis points. They were, as a group,

more assertive and confident from the start. They were more readily prepared to challenge the replies and arguments of the management reps. They generally had a larger input into the meetings than some of the reps. from other groups. They more speedily came to the point where they were prepared to take on some of the more sensitive issues. For instance the vague general issue of 'communications' appeared on this groups agenda as it had elsewhere, but one of the reps. quite quickly pointed out that the issue involved 'relationships', as he put it, as well. What this glosses is that communications, if it is to be realistically addressed, must come to consider the relations between supervision and the shop-floor. All the criticisms of the line management would come out. It would entail attacks on peoples character, their style of working, and so on. Sensitive issues indeed; the type of frontal exposure the consultants had tried for a long time to steer the packaging group away from.

Some of these differences are not attributable to the shop-floor in isolation. The definitions of, certainly the consultants, and of some of the managers had been subject to alteration and subtle shifts over a period of time and this is reflected to a degree in the shifts of approach and meaning in the dry products group. The reps. are, at least to some extent, responding to the interactions with those other parties. The consultants had for instance, increasingly come to accept that a more openly confrontational style might not necessarily be a bad thing. The definitional process is continual, emergent and interactive at all times.

This group of reps. also became better organised as a group and as individuals more rapidly than others. For instance they were taking notes at the meetings after only the first one or two. There

was mention early on about the need to 'do homework' on an issue; something that it took a long time for the packaging group to appreciate. It was not long, then, before reps. started to come to meetings and present quite extended and detailed arguments. They quickly moved on from the bald presentation of a grievance or the simple asking of questions without exploring some of the background, some of the parameters and some of the conceivable solutions. They also became aware of the problem of group solidarity and related issues, at a much earlier stage. It was not long before some of them were proposing that the reps. should be meeting as a group before formal main meetings to compare notes and locate common ground.

There are some indications, then, in the way they managed the meetings and perceived their role, that they moved much earlier from those definitions of participation where they passively took the issues to management, who in traditional manner took them off their hands and came back after making the decisions to provide answers or instigate action. They learnt more quickly to reject the notion of a completely non-combative definition and to see the thing in terms of a struggle for control of the definitional process. They were quick to adopt a language that spoke of 'homework' preparation, combined effort and so on. They recognised the feasibility of management ploys and the necessity that they adopt some too. There is a move here away from the 'cooperation', 'we have common problems-we must work together' definitions, although they may not have put it in those terms, and may, indeed, have continued to pay lip-service to that sort of definition.

But again the interactive effect of exposure to the emerging definitions of the consultants and people like Macheath, and the

general context of a continually emergent definitional process should not be neglected. Like the vast majority of the workforce, the reps. discourse on participation was initially extremely undeveloped and in some cases a veritable tabula rasa. Again in the early stages, the definitional vacuum was filled by the presented rhetoric of senior management and the input of the consultants. The early definitions of the reps. reveal much of this 'off-the-peg' language and a compliance with the conservative and homely presentations of others.

The reps. defined themselves most firmly as delegate representatives and not at all as leaders to begin with. Sonia was fairly typical.

R.I.W.: "Now you are involved in it how do you see your role?"

Sonia: "Well, to bring the views of my people to the meeting - to get information for them. ...I don't see myself as a leader at all really, I think I'm there just to represent my members."

But, a little later:

R.I.W.: "Are there any issues, sorts of issues, that you feel shouldn't be brought up at the meeting - anything you think would be inappropriate to take there?"

Sonia: "To be honest most of the issues I've taken up to now have been...uhh...have been my own really. Things that I think would be good for the company. Some people have brought things up that I thought were stupied (gives example) - so I don't bring those up. Some people raised the issue of BUPA - but I didn't think that was as important as some other issues, so I didn't raise it. I got some stick for that. I thought the fire-drill thing was more important, that's why I raised that."

R.I.W.: "But are there issues at the other end that you feel you shouldn't be involved in - that you don't think it's legitimate to get involved in?"

Sonia: "No, I don't think so."

R.I.W.: "Would you, for instance, be prepared to discuss pay at these meetings?"

Sonia: "Yes, I think so. Although the company does pay well. I wouldn't ask for more than the government policy."

R.I.W.: "Would you expect the management to draw the line on some issues - how would you react?"

Sonia: "Hmm, I don't know really...I suppose I'd just keep on at them if its something I felt strongly about - something I felt we should have and we are right about. I wouldn't ask for anything unreasonable, anything that would cost a lot of money - but, you know, things within reason."

The obvious contradictions in peoples conversations should not be the cause for any surprise, or for any smugness. There is some element in this exchange of Sonia being unsure of my role vis-a-vis the company perhaps, and a sense of her saying what she feels she ought to be saying (the methodological dilemmas of that will be ducked here). She had already been labelled as a representative so it is not surprising that that is how she describes her role even if her subsequent talk belies it. One can envisage the divisions between reps. and members very readily from this type of exchange. Sonia clearly sees it as legitimate to ignore the wishes of her members if she feels they are misguided. It later became apparent that she was also selective in what she fed back to her members. She had taken the responsibility for being the arbiter in matters relating to participation. Again there is the language here that creates a new hierarchy, a new source of definitional power.

It is also significant to note the conservative, collusive attitude she adopts towards the definition of issues. Definitions that put participation at the service of the 'company'. Participation should

be about doing things that are 'good for the company'. Participation might include discussions on lofty matters like pay, but that does not imply claims that go beyond the company's (or the government's) best interests. Participation involves an awareness of a greater good, a "reasonableness", a good sense and a place in the steady community of established order. The reader will recall from some early sections how the traditional, conservative response of the shop-floor was quite pervasive. Certainly one would have been able to find many a company manager who would have applauded these sentiments, who indeed could easily have said them himself.

Sonia, like all the reps. admitted that she had little awareness of various discourses on participation in the wider community. Some of the reps. were not even much aware of the goings-on within their own company. They had a meagre, if not non-existent, familiarity with, what I have earlier termed the 'technical' meanings of participation. It is in this way perhaps that their early talk about participation is littered with the same terms as those presented by others on site.

R.I.W.: "What did participation mean to you then, before you actually got involved?"

Mark: "Well, it meant representatives from all levels, different levels, in the company getting together...to share information and to get involved in the decisions about work in the place. Well really the sort of thing we are doing here now."

The exchange continues to a consideration of the legitimacy of the types of issues that could be dealt with by participation.

Mark: "No I don't think there is anything that should be ruled out. I think there are some silly small issues that could be handled in the normal way...I mean some

> things would be a waste of time to take to such a meeting. But I think we should be involved in lots of things.
> I mean to say, we all come to work together, you know, to earn money...me, Mr. Kerrick and everyone...I think we should all be involved in the decisions that go on."

The reps. were prepared to include any type of issue under participation, in theory, although they were not always able to articulate what level of issue that might take them to. Mark, for instance admitted that he found it difficult to imagine what sort of issues they might get involved in at that stage. He suggested that they might only be able to solve 'in house' problems at that point. He pointed out that there were many decisions that were made outside of the department. Such a comment makes way for the management's attempts to outlaw issues on the basis of them being labelled site-wide. It is likely that Mark would already have been aware that other groups has experienced some difficulty in progressing issues that impinged on areas outside of their own department.

R.I.W.: "But what if, say, the department was getting some new plant, some new machinery, do you think that's a legitimate area for you to be involved in?"

Mark: "Oh yes, I do. I mean we've had examples of that in the past where the company has brought machinery without consultation and it's not proved very effective."

He goes on to suggest that the shop-floor are able to make a positive contribution in relation to those types of decisions. There is an affirmation again, then, of the meaning of participation as the useful exploitation of the under utilised talent and knowledge of the shop-floor. Participation is that mechanism that allows the resources of the company to be harnessed and used more effectively. Note too that he refers to 'consultation' in this context.

Like Sonia and some of the others Mark is quite prepared to get involved in discussions about pay, and even in issues that are of a corporate nature. However, this is said as an 'in principle' reply. It is clear that participation for them does not exclude the possibility of being involved in consultations on issues of corporate policy, wage scales and acquisitions of plant. However they seem to accept that in the current circumstances and in their own case, participation might well mean something less.

Both Sonia and Mark were comparatively young members of staff; some of the other reps. were much older and had some experience of being involved in health and safety committees and other liaison committees. For example Edmund explained to me in conversation, his feelings about his new role and the sense of cautiously feeling his way into it. As he puts it:

> Edmund: "We're not really used to meetings...I expect you've been to hundreds. I used to be a shop-steward before - but this is entirely different. As a shop-steward you go in and as soon as management say anything - you're on him. But we don't want that here...it's a different style."

He maintains that the company and the workforce generally are together in not wanting trade union activity on site. The meaning of participation here is derived directly from this overt relation of difference to the style and procedures of trade union activity. Participation is not like the stereotypical 'tub-thumping' of trade union-management negotiations. It would, then, be less aggressive and less conflict oriented. The shop-floor rep. is not mandated to permanantly attack his managerial rivals. There would be more co-operation, a greater commonality of purpose. Note that the question of participation being about management style is echoed here.

Edmund continues a little later to define participation more directly:

> Edmund: "I think participation is about getting together to work out how to work better...its finding better ways, uh...I mean its the production that's important. We've had this stuff about canteens and that, but they're trifles really. But, its the talk about production that's important. Its working out how to work more effectively...more efficiently - getting more production out."

(In discussion it was revealed that ultimately the argument runs - 'the better the productivity, the better the profits - the more there should be for the workers. However, he reiterates the point made by many others that the company does pay well and that wages as such aren't an issue at the moment. He suggests that the workers should be able to take the initiative - if they make an input that improves productivity, they are then in a position to go to management and say, 'look, production has improved, how about a raise?') I asked him if he thought that the provision of information was an important aspect of participation (something of a leading question I acknowledge).

> Edmund: "Oh yes, we need to make sure that we get information - the men should know what's going on. I mean, take the other night, we had this group of visitors come round, quite a lot of them too, but we weren't even told anything about it until the night before. It's diabolical innit - the lads get very angry about it.

There is nothing outlandish, or at all radical in the way that Edmund here defines participation. Indeed, there is much that his own management would have been happy to hear. The emphasis on efficient production, despite the coveat about there being more of a cake to share out is quite revealing. Yet again the meanings relate to a consensus, a working together, a mutuality, the return of the 'we are

all in this together so let's all pull in the same direction at once' attitude. He says that participation is all about "sharing ideas... and discussing things". There is the suggestion of a more elemental idealism in some of the early definitions on offer from the shop-floor reps. There are noble ideas of communitas, of equality of spirit and of sharing. There may well be an element of posturing in this type of speech, particularly since some of the reps. from this area seemed less certain about the nature of my involvement.

Edmund too, was quite willing to allow participation to incorporate quite a wide range of issues. But when I put the proposition that they might get involved in matters of company budgeting he implied that that was a specialist job for experts, and that the shop-floor people could not really have anything important to contribute. But he did go on to say, that it might be a question of training and would not rule that level of involvement out in principle. There was again a sense of what participation might mean in theory and what it might mean in practice at their own place of work. Participation might mean this and this; but for this company here and now it can't seriously mean those things so it will have to mean this and this.

By the time the first few meetings had taken place, the reps. were reasonably happy with the way things were going. They had been pleasantly surprised and reassured by the response of the management members. The atmosphere was more relaxed and friendly than they had expected. Some of the reps. had been rather worried about their capacity to act effectively in that type of situation. For some it was a personal lack of confidence: "I'm not a committee type of person really", as one person put it; while for others there was a degree of

awe and concern about being able to match their managers. In the event, I think most of the members found the whole thing easier than they had anticipated.

They were already becoming critical of certain aspects of the scheme. In particular they made reference to the slow progress. As with the packaging group, issues were taking too long to progress. Some issues had already been on the agenda for some time without being resolved. Others had been raised by the membership but had not even received a consideration. There was also the feeling that nothing substantial had been tackled, that the issues dealt with so far had not been very meaty and people were still waiting to test the scheme out with a more challenging issue.

One of the issues that was beginning to emerge at the meetings, although in something of a disguised form, was referred to by Josh. It concerned job grading and some related issues.

Josh: "....that's a major issue. It affects everyone, doesn't it? its related to skill levels and all that.
(He goes into some detail about the specifics of the grading scheme at Tridy and some of the problems he sees in it. In particular there is the problem of men acquiring a number of skills but not being upgraded as a result.) He continues:

Josh: "It's very difficult. The men I have spoken to aren't satisfied - they can see the problems; but they say different things. I mean that they might moan to be individually, but when they are asked officially they say something different. Do you see the predicament that puts me in. The only answer I can see is if Mr. Kerrick comes down to the shop-floor and sees the men individually, and gets the truth out of them. That's the only way I can see. There's so much two-facedness around.

R.I.W.: "So you don't think participation, the participation meetings can solve this particular grading problem?"

Josh: "No. The only way is for the individuals... to get the individuals by themselves and get them to tell the truth."

This is one of the few instances where the shop-floor reps. had sought to limit the scope of participation. For Josh at least, participation was by no means a panacea for all the difficulties faced by the shop-floor membership. He is prepared to put more faith in traditional mechanisms for resolving certain important issues. It is interesting that he is prepared to allow the responsibility for the issue to reside with the section director. In this instance it is being maintained that the very public nature of participation, a positive boon in other ways, would mitigate against the truth coming out and the issue being satisfactorily resolved. The talk here clashes with that other talk of mutuality, sharedness and open trust.

Josh is having some difficulty coming to terms with his role. I got the impression that participation was no great shakes as far as he was concerned, that it was only a minor amendment to existing practices; certainly not an isolated view, and one bolstered by managements definitions of participation not supplanting normal relations and procedures. Like the others, he in no way visualised the role in terms of leadership, and indeed reacted quite strongly to the notion that it might;

R.I.W.: "Well what about some of the other issues, are you prepared to discuss them at the meetings....some of the smaller issues?"

Josh: "Oh yes. I don't mind that. You know, if the men have a particular complaint about something...I don't mind putting their views forward. But I don't want to be the spearhead. I don't want to argue points for the rest of them. I don't see why I should have to come and argue with management...its not my place to..."

He continues in a similar vein, saying that he is a mere worker like everyone else, just an ordinary chap; "Its not my place to change the world." He can't see why he should have to get personally so involved. The responsibilities lie with management. It is not his position to help them solve their problems. They are paid to take those responsibilities, they have the 'brains' and the qualifications. He admits that there are problems, that many people are dissatisfied, but he would not accept that he had any responsibility or obligation to do anything about it. As he put it "I'm happy at home and not really too uncomfortable at work why should I bring a lot of aggro on myself?" He returns to the theme of grading and how it should be handled:

> Josh: "If we try and tackle, say, the grading problems through the representation system then we remove the point of direct contact between the individual who knows the job and his problems and a member of senior management who is in a position to sort it out. By using a rep. you are introducing an unnecessary and distorting mediator that would interfere with that useful contact."

Josh, to a degree, exhibits some common themes in the discourse of the general shop-floor membership. Participation is viewed with some scepticism. It is not regarded in anyway as a momentous and radical alteration to the existing work environment. At most it is yet another of managements new and rather fanciful exercises. A number of people claimed that they were not surprised by the company embarking on such an enterprise, it was seen as another of those supposedly progressive exercises of which the company appeared particularly enamoured of late. As Eric, another of the reps., puts it:

> "...the company's like that now - they like to try out new methods and that. They keep thinking up new ways of doing things, there are loads of different ways of thinking about things. I mean, they are

> always running courses and lectures and all things like that. I think that's what a lot of the blokes think this is - you know, 'oh it's just one of those' - and that nothing much would actually come of it."

The reps. reported that their members were still apathetic and incredulous. They made reference to the failure to obtain action in the past and the inertia of past formal efforts. The feeling of 'we've given up' was quite pervasive giving rise to a uniform unresponsiveness and lack of belief. Josh downgrades the importance and significance, partially because he has no sense of owning the proejct. It is merely a tinkering manifestation of the company's quasi progressive stance. He will go along with it to a degree, but is not prepared to invest it with much of himself. If something comes out of it, then that is a bonus; if it comes to nothing, then that is only what was to be expected. Participation is only a supplement to existing systems of management control, grafted on by management for reasons of their own. Indeed Josh is more inclined to retain some vestige of faith in existing arrangements to alleviate current difficulties. It might even be the case that participation would negatively interfere with some of the currently available mechanisms of industrial relations. He is prepared to put faith in the responsiveness of individual senior managers; this despite the continued and ubituitous complaints on just that issue. It is part of managers obligations to cope with and settle grievances presented to them by their subordinates. Their very position as manager naturally places them in such a way that they are able to "sort it out". That is their duty and their right.

One begins to see the potential effectiveness of managerial rhetoric. It is a rhetoric that is crafted and shaped to match well with the common and habitual discourse of the shop-floor. In a

general sense the rhetoric of participation does not do violence to some commonly held beliefs about the nature of workplace relations and practices. Participation, as we are frequently reminded, does not transgress existing and 'normal' ways of doing things. At best it is an addendum to those ways; it is not a replacement. It is de-radicalised and recuperated from its potential difference and wildness in that way, and by the fact that, so called, progressive turns have become institutionalised within the company. The company is seen as almost habitually adopting a stance of innovation and progressive action, but these excursions have come to be viewed by the workforce as part of the status quo. They are not seen as radical, as significantly affecting the mundane working lives of members. They are essentially management affairs; they are generated and owned by management and have little to do with the man on the shop-floor. They are management games, arranged and played by them: they devise the rules and the play and the outcomes. The fundamental working life of the shop-floor worker is not perceived as being affected by these hybrids.

Reading Participation And Understanding Organisational Practice

From the very first meeting in December an issue began to surface that was to dominate the proceedings of the dry products group for the duration of my involvement. The life of that issue and its treatment by those involved is most revealing of the emergence of definitions of participation; of the development of counter-definition and the attendant effort to preserve existing definitions. As with the packaging group I will use the issue to illustrate the machinations of this group; although I shall make reference to some other issues and points in the process.

The issue took a little time to crystallize. This was due in part to a certain tentativeness and ill-preparedness on the part of the shop-floor and a degree of deliberate obfuscation on the part of management. But before we embark on that Gordian Knot there is time for a short interlude.

Unpaid Leave: Part Omega

The reader cannot fail to recall the convolutions of the infamous unpaid leave issue from earlier sections. The issue resurfaces again with this group. The fact that it does is one of the indications that they were at least to some extent aware of some of the happenings in the other groups. As Mark says when the issue is brought up at the first meeting:

> Mark: "I think you know what the situation is - our problems are probably the same as you've heard from the other groups."

Immediately the issue emerges then Macheath tries to smoother it out. He embarks on one of his lengthy monologues that inevitably seem to lose people by being overinvolved, off the point, or plain soporific. I will only give the reader a part of what he had to say, in case it has the same effect in the written form:

> Macheath: "It often seems to start off as a major issue, but its not - it's only an issue for some individuals - but it can be a major one for them.
> We've discussed what time-off is for... Uhh some people say that the four weeks holiday is just that, and that any other time taken off is different. But another very important issue impinges here - we operate a very tight head-count at this company - it just has to be like that, people seem to forget, but you can't have people taking time-off when they feel like it uh...

> The occasions when unpaid leave is required are - umm limited - so...in order to get consistency if not complete impartiality, if the supervisor can't make a satisfactory decision then the thing should be referred to **** (the personnel director), then he makes the decision.
> It's a very difficult one."

There is an initial denial of the significance of the issue. This attempt had been made before. An issue is an issue only when it is defined as such by certain parties. However in the same breath, Macheath acknowledges that still an issue might appear as important to the individual involved. The argument switches to a different tack; the complexity of what is involved is highlighted as justification. It will be remembered that Macheath was fond of declaring that in the real world there were not easy, straightforward answers to all problems. He then introduces a pragmatic argument that relates to well-known and widely acknowledged company practice. The companies 'tight head-count' has a near mythical status on site. It is referred to frequently, especially by managers but also by members of the shop-floor. It is widely accepted as a plausible explanation of certain procedures and outcomes in the work environment. The invocation of it as explanation or justification is rarely challenged. The fact of 'tight head-count' is almost universally accepted as the natural state of affairs. That is the given; the way things are. If something is to be altered then the solution must be looked for elsewhere. The naturalness of the tightness of the headcount is taken for granted and is sacrosanct. The workforce readily acknowledge the veracity of the argument.

Macheath returns to the motif in which the issue is degraded. It is not <u>that</u> important since the occasions when it is required are so limited any way. He ends by reasserting the complexity and the

justification for the authority being invested in one senior, expert. The personnel director as flawed oracle. It's the best of a bad job, but then the issue is 'very difficult'.

Whilst familiar to the reader and to the packaging reps. these offerings were new to the dry products reps.

Tom: (Section Supervisor) "So unpaid compassionate leave is granted" (said with a degree of surprise.)

Kerrick: "Uh uh...hang on Tom...let's get this clear; there are two types of policy." (somewhat flustered he explains that there is a policy for compassionate leave that is different from unpaid leave). "So there is...one can get compassionate leave - unpaid leave - or...uh...straight holidays."

Mark: But unfortunately no one knows what the criteria for compassionate leave are."

Tom: "I do, it's in the pamphlet."

Mark: Does it only relate to breavement?"

Kerrick: "There is a breavement policy...ah..." (shakes his head and smiles)"

Macheath: "There are some problems...we are aware of them..."

The debate continues; mainly between the shop-floor reps. and the section supervisor Tom. They then ask the management reps. to confirm or otherwise what the group had teased out. Macheath explains that for unpaid leave the final decision rests with the personnel director.

Kerrick: "Do you feel that has helped to clarify the situation?"

(Silence)

Mark: "Hmm."

In the end it is Hamming, realising perhaps that the debate has been going in circles, and perhaps sensing the frustration and embarrassment of management, who suggests that the group move on to something else. The issue did not appear to be a priority for the reps. in this group. Rather, they seemed to be aware that it had been an issue in other groups and were seeking some clarification: which they singularly failed to get. The management reps. clearly felt that a ghost had come back to haunt them. In their haste to dispense with the issue before it hounded them to the grave, they fell over themselves in trying to provide a cohesive and adequate story. In the end they lost themselves and were forced to return to the time honoured paternalism where they agree to recognise that there is a difficulty, but that they are aware of it and will do something about it in due course.

However, the issue appeared, spectre-like at the next meeting. Kerrick said hopefully:

> Kerrick: "Do we need to say anything more about unpaid leave?"
>
> Macheath: "Oh it's with me till I die (ghastly chuckle) ....can we just say that were are collecting cases...it's a question of time, we've just got to be patient.
> (a little later) "There is no way you will get total satisfaction on this at the end of the day..unless you say that people can have time-off when they ask for it, and I think we'd agree that's not realistic - not at this stage."

Macheath replays his 'in the real world' script. But again he makes it clear that management are in control of the issue and that they, in the end, will provide the answers. People must be patient with the procrastinations of their fathers. Once again, too, he seeks to exploit the taken-for-granted of the inevitability of the head-count, and the communal good sense that recognises that this prevents the

possibility of the policy being such that members can take unpaid leave when they require it, unvetted.

The Infernal Micro-Wave Oven Saga

But back to the main story. The issue that came to occupy centre stage for the chief dramas of the dry products group concerned the canteen and eating arrangements of, mainly, the night-shift personnel. As already indicated the issue was first raised at the inaugural meeting of the group in December.

The chairman, Kerrick, tried to pass over the issue by asking the group if they could leave agenda items four and six. At this stage I do not think there was anything sinister about that move; it was merely a matter of expendiency. But, even at this early stage the members were not prepared to allow the management reps. to dictate the processing of issues and they insisted that the issue be tackled.

Edmund: "No we can't pass <u>that</u> over - the canteen for the night shift is a very important issue. The men are angry."

The department manager confirms that feelings are running high. The shop-floor reps. begin to make their opening bids.

Tom: "Why can't the main canteen be open at night?"

Cecil: (department manager) "Oh" (shakes head and draws in breath).

Edmund: "Well there's enough people on shift to justify it. It's not really very acceptable to have people cooking all over the place."

Kerrick: "I think we ought to look at some other alternatives before we look at opening the canteen."

Cecil: "They want cooking and washing facilities."

Edmund: "Yes a lot of the equipment has been supplied by the workers themselves...but it's hopeless at the moment.
You need a hot meal at night, you can't have sandwiches every time. The capsule plant have good facilities, that was provided by the company. I don't see why we can't."

The reps. introduce the first option, that of opening the main canteen at night and offer some justificatory arguments. Somewhat rattled, Kerrick immediately tries to head them off. The reps mount their argument and point to the inequality in relation to other areas on site. Other options begin to emerge. The reps. are not as passive as those in the packaging group at this stage. They are not willing to pass over the issue to management with only the problem defined, they are willing and able to pursue some of the potential solutions. Even the department manager joins in.

Cecil: "What about the Nouella Nace - could that be utilised."
(a room near to the canteen that was partially used for sales to the staff of the companies cosmetic range. The room was very under-utilised.)

Edmund: "Most companies have what you call a 'sub-canteen facility' we don't here...the men feel strongly that they aren't being provided for."

Kerrick was to introduce a suggestion at this point that became a near comic focus for the whole canteen saga. Amidst the flurry of suggestions he slipped in, for the moment unobtrusively, "What about the infra-red?" Scant attention was paid to the interjection at the time.

The reps. continued to build their case, pointing out that the company must be losing money with the time wasted due to the current old-fashioned cooking arrangements. These consisted of one

of the shift supervisors taking time out to assemble the sausages, eggs, pies and other culinary paraphenalia that the men brought in and preparing non-cordon bleu dishes for everyone on a common-or-garden domestic gas cooker.

Kerrick warms to his theme and mentions again that a micro-wave oven has a certain appeal. But the idea does not receive raucous approval. Sensing that the issues is dragging on, and that he does not want to commit the company to extravagent and/or expensive re-building programmes, he makes a move to delay the debate and to take it, at least temporarily, outside of the confines of the committee room. He suggests that it is something that ought to be looked into in more detail. The reps. agree that they ought to consult their membership. Kirknatch interposes by laying out three suggestions that have already come to the fore: to open the main canteen; to use the Nouella Nace room; and Kerrick's formidable infra-red machine.

Cecil, alternately characterised by the shop-floor as either 'two-faced' or 'a bit of an old woman' (or both), but usually not as being au fait with the mood and hassles of the shop-floor, pipes in with a surprisingly apt and targeted comment at this point.

> Cecil: "I feel strongly about this. The men are sceptical about participation. If we can get action on this then we have a trump card. If they can see action on this they may begin to believe that participation is going to do something."

The context of this remark may have something to do with the perceived requirement to be seen to be supporting the right causes in the right way. The commitment to participation in terms of action is blantantly cosmetic however. Nonetheless, all those present, including the shop-floor members were struck by the reality of what was said.

The issue became somewhat confused at this point by the introduction of the issue of the provision and adequacy of the vending machines in the area. This was to have unfortunate consequences by the time of the next meeting.

At the next meeting the agenda had listed as point six: food facilities. Macheath was asked to respond to the issue and went into one of his lengthy explanations, but only concerned himself with the question of vending machines. It was up to the reps. to return the debate (sic) to the proper issue.

Edmund: "Yes, but the main thing is the dinner time itself. Most people want some facilities for cooking. They aren't interested in a micro-wave oven."

Macheath ignores him and continues to talk, with Kerrick, about the vending machines. This continues for some time until another of the reps. draws attention to the fact that his members are requesting better cooking facilities. Kerrick responds by extolling some of the virtues of the micro-wave oven, space-saving, efficient etc. The reps. re-run some of their case.

Edmund: "The capsule plant have had these facilities for years...I mean we've been behind for ages. Even when we got moved to this new building we were not catered for. The night shift is completely forgotten about.

I'll tell you now, the men don't want a micro-wave oven. If it's put in we are stuck with it, I mean why try and put it in - they don't want it."

Cecil: "I want to give the micro-wave a fair hearing uh...perhaps we ought to check it out with the people?"

Edmund: "But I've checked with my people - I've come back to you to state that they don't want it."

Macheath: "But are they aware of what a micro-wave entails?"

From Edmund's point of view he is performing the representative's role as put before him by various parties; he has guaged the opinions of his membership and is feeding them into the meeting. Cecil, always eager to be fair and not to rush into things: or as the shop-floor would have it 'sitting on the fence' and 'shilly-shalling'. The group is again denied the right to debate the issue directly and come up with their own solution. The reps. have consulted their membership, but the answer was not the one the management wanted to hear so the process is further delayed.

However it did become clear in the discussions that a number of people were under a misapprehension. Some, it appeared, thought that a micro-wave oven could only re-heat pre-cooked food. Some, too were worried about the safety aspects of the oven (there had been some scare-mongering in the press; and of course there is the joke about the sweet old lady who put her darling poodle into the mico-wave - as she had always done with her old electric one - to dry its coat after bathy wathies, only to find little Toots roasted.)

The reps. again raise the suggestion of using the Nouella Nace room, since whatever the facilities, they have to be housed somewhere. Kerrick responds that the room is used as a conference room. To which they respond that a conference room is not used at night and that the facilities could be discreetly housed there. Besides everyone knew that the room was only very infrequently used as a conference room. Kerrick tries a new tack. He puts forward the idea that the issue has become confused and needs further considera-tion. Again he removes the issue from the direct control of the

sitting group by suggesting that they form a sub-committee to examine the problem. The committee is to consist of Edmund, Mark and Macheath.

Apart from this issue, the majority of the other issues being raised by the group were handled in a traditional way for the most part. Frequently the issues would be presented to the management in a bald open ended fashion. Consequently the responses tended to be in terms of the passing down of information from management to the shop-floor. The reps. generally remained in the passive mode, although, perhaps because of the canteen issue, there were movements towards a more active mode. For instance, it was about this time that Mark urged that the reps. met together before the main meetings. And of course they were not allowing the canteen issue to slip totally out of their control.

At the meeting in March the issue is inevitably on the agenda once again. Macheath takes it on himself to talk on behalf of the so-called 'sub-group'. He launches into a report in which the opinions of the shop-floor are said to reveal three major alternatives.

Alt.I. To improve existing facilities - adapt and improve them - with the addition of a micro-wave oven and the provision of some cupboards. This had an estimated cost of about £200.

Alt.2. Conversion of part of the Nouella Nace room - take existing equipment up there and add some new cupboards etc. est. cost c. £700.

Alt.3. Some structural changes to the lounge area, extending the space into the adjacent room, usual additions. Est. cost c.£1500-1800.

Macheath: "My two colleagues have gauged the opinion of their members - the general view is that alternative two is adequate."

Just how these particular options were generated was never made clear, although I believe that the shop-floor did have some input. After

some brief discussion, Kerrick summarises and initiates the next phase.

Kerrick: "I'm commited to doing something...and fairly quickly.....
What we need is to get engineering to do a proper costing - even as far as getting the RCA out...we should get engineering to take it as a project.
Could you James (Macheath) take Edmund and Mark and try and discover the perceived pros cons of the alternatives between the micro-wave and the more conventional ways?"

A decision cannot be reached, even in principle until a proper costing has been done. Once again, however justifiably, the issue is taken out of the hands of the group. It was not a question of 'let's decide what we want and then get a costing, and if it's too expensive we can have a rethink'. True to managerial form, Kerrick will not allow any decision until he has seen what it's going to cost. He also will not allow the micro-wave oven suggestion to drop even though it had still received absolutely no support from any of the shop-floor.

The issue of the vending machines, now separated from the main issue, was coming to a boil at this meeting too. There is a scene in which Macheath, already under pressure over the canteen arrangements, loses his cool and in which the reps. assert their knowledge against his. The consultants make an intervention that generalises the exchange.

Roger: "It's still not being done properly....
it's not being filled-up at 4 o'clock."

Macheath: "Well maybe we just haven't got the capa-city down there."

Tom: "The answer is to fill them up more often."

Macheath: (sharply) "Well that's all very well Tom if you want to go and do it." (Kerrick shakes his head at looks down).

Edmund: "It's not always full...even in the afternoons. What do you mean by full...she doesn't always fill them up even in those two sessions."

Macheath: "She does. I've seen her."

Edmund: "No, I'm sorry....

Macheath: (angrily) "Look...."

Edmund: "I don't want to argue with you about this - if you come down to our place at the periods you'll see."

Macheath: "Right, right, I will...I'll come down and check when she fills-up myself."

(Macheath and Tom have another small altercation, during which Macheath snaps "What do you mean you don't understand?"

Kerrick attempts to get control by saying that certain checks have already been made but that the group is still not in full possession of the facts. Fuller information needs to be put before the group. To which Macheath replies: "I couldn't agree more."

Kirknatch intervenes:

Kirknatch: "There is a general point here. There will be differences between people in this group. We need to reflect occasionally on some of these differences. In this case it's a difference of facts - so let's get the true facts - on other issues the differences may result from a genuine conflict of interests."

Macheath: "OK I accept the point, but there is a problem that peoples expectations will sometimes be impossible to achieve."

Kirknatch: "Yes I agree, but things got a little high... if we understand how...or the causes of the differences then we can handle things better."

Things calmed down somewhat and Kerrick moved on rapidly to another issue. But after the meeting the recriminations went on. Part of the reason for the outburst was the pressure and the frustration concerning the canteen issue: from both sides. The reps. were beginning to feel that they weren't getting anywhere and were under pressure from a sceptical and impatient membership. Macheath was invariably saddled with the task of liaising with the reps. on managements' behalf and with trying to secure action in areas where it was not easy to do so. The management group were also aware of the push for something substantial over the canteen issue and were perhaps aware that they were unlikely to fulfill the men's expectations. Kerrick was probably under pressure to ensure that costs were kept to a minimum. This pressure may have been overt, although I heard no reference to it. Rather the ethos of the place would immediately suggest to Kerrick that he should be wary of understanding expensive schemes.

At the next meeting there was a suggestion from Mark that they try and get through items from the last meeting fairly rapidly since the meetings are often too slow and thereby fresh issues are not being tackled. Consequently when it came to the canteen issue Macheath gave a perfunctory account of the current position and Kerrick promised that a solution was imminent: as he puts it "the engineers have taken it up and are running with it." The issue was firmly out of the hands of the group for the time being, although there was a promise that the sub-group would be kept informed. For this meeting the issue was left in abeyence waiting on the report from the project engineers.

By the next meeting significant 'progress' had been made: Macheath was able to present to the group the report of the project engineers. He does so with the aid of over-head slides. There are four major alternatives.

1.	Modification of the Nouella Nace room.	cost c. £3250
2.	Modification of the 'understairs' area.	" " £2312
3.	Utilise existing area in dry products lounge.	" " £1198
4.	'Breaking in' to the plant room.	" " £4393.

Macheath: "I suggest that **** (project engineer) goes ahead with the RCA making his recommendations."

Mark: (clearly angered) "Mr. Macheath, I was under the impression that we had agreed that the Nouella Nace room was the best alternative."

Macheath: "Ah yes, that's your preference, but I'm not sure the RCA...the technical committee would readily accept that preference."

Mark: "But **** (the project engineer) is doing extra work."

Macheath: "But it's the way the technical committee works Mark...you've got to understand how they operate."

Mark: "But then we've wasted more than two months on this. God we've spent two months making a choice and now that choice is irrelevant. We should have had the technical committee people in from the start...why didn't we? I don't see the point of all this."

Kerrick: "Yes Mark, but you must appreciate that on things like this, where we are spending money and making alterations, there are other people involved. There are procedures for doing things."

Mark: "I know that, but the engineers should have been brought in two months ago. Now we've just got a decision made by other people... its made what we've been doing all this time a waste of effort. The lads made their choice ages ago...they think that's what they are going to get. That's what we thought it was all about."

Macheath: "Yes, yes, it's your preference, we know that, but there are a number of other factors...cost, time etc. that have to be taken into account. We are refining all that now. The technical committee will consider all these things and make the final acceptance."

Mark: "Well, we did all that...you asked us to check out the opinion of the men and uh... make a choice...we made a choice...we've done all that. The committee thing... they might make a decision that isn't acceptable to the men."

Kerrick: "Nothing's been decided yet Mark...but there are a lot of things to be taken into account. These things take time and aren't simple there's a lot of paper work to be gone through you know..."

Mark: "Unfortunately the men feel they've decided all this...done all the paper work. They feel they were promised to have the RCA submitted by May."

Kerrick and Macheath accept that there had been some delays. In justification they mention that the project engineer had been off ill for a while and that had delayed things. They had intended to meet the May date but it had not been possible. Mark refers to some past minutes in his file to demonstrate his point: Kerrick rustles through his. Neither seems certain of where to go next. There is a heavy pause.

Kerrick: "I uh, I realise it's an agenda item that people are interested in...and that you uhmm...have difficulty explaining to your men but....
I don't want to make an arbitrary decision... uh... Look you (Mark) and Edmund go along with James and see...(the project engineer and look at the pros and cons.)

Mark: "Yes, but we've done all this before. He should have been brought in right from the start. The men will feel they are being let down. They've made their choice."

Kerrick: "There is a problem, I appreciate that. In hindsight we could perhaps have involved the engineer earlier. But it's normal procedures Mark. All RCA's have to go before the technical committee for their consideration and approval. It's all done that way. Its not just this request you know. But our approval record is good - not much gets turned down once its been through the process."

Mark: "Yes OK, but look, we are putting forward a preference...we need a compromise, between what the group need and what management want. We don't want it where we go through the committee and them saying, 'that's what you'll have.' The men won't wear that."

Kerrick: "No, no...I want you to look at it too. But ahh...I've got to justify this...outside... if I get asked why we've done it in a particular way."

Macheath: "Yes, that's right, Mike can't say 'we've done this because the lads want it'... that's only one aspect of the equation... but Mike has to justify it in economic, space and utilisation terms."

Kerrick: "Something will be done, there's no doubt about that. I don't want you to go back to your men and give the impression that its all been delayed."

Eric: "People are worried about where things are going to be."

Edmund: Oh no...they are mostly concerned about whether they are going to get anything or not."

Kerrick: "Well they know they are."

Edmund: "Ohh no they don't. It's gone on so long. People are saying its been pushed under the carpet."

Kerrick: "Well let me assure you and your members that it has not been pushed under the carpet."

Macheath: "I mean Mark, in your daily life...you get involved in immediate decisions don't you... but Mike and I are involved in things where decisions may take up to two years to pass through."

With that crushing remark the discussion grinds to a grim halt. Later in the same meeting the issue of training and grading also came up and was to prove to be equally sensitive, although people seemed to lack the heart on this occasion for an open conflict. Also in the meeting Kerrick took the opportunity to explain some of the future plans about the participation project. He explains about the extension to a divisional group. The presentation is greeted with a stony silence. No one is prepared or interested to engage in a debate about participation after what had just preceded. The meeting spluttered to a finish and when Kerrick asked if there were any urgent issues that people wanted including on the text agenda Mark stated pointedly and with some chagrin; "Only the canteen facilities."

Things had reached a low point; and more quickly in this group than in packaging. The debate over the canteen facilities telescopes into a shorter period of time some of the processes encountered in the other groups. Management had presented some of their definitions of participation in the opening rhetorics, the reps. had tested them out and had discovered some of the limits. As far as the reps. were concerned they had done all that was expected of them; they had played according to the rules defined for them. They had raised the issue, they had considered options, they had patiently canvassed opinion. Unfortunately they had misread the messages from management.

Much of the rhetoric, on examination, as we have seen, retrieved participation within the fold of normal and existing ways of doing things. It had spoken of sharing and so on, but had most readily spoken of sharing information, of communication and of consultation. The reps. had clearly come to want to define participation

in terms of their involvement in the actual decisions being taken. As it turned out, at least for this issue, participation was defined more in terms of consultation and suggestions that would be considered by those in power in coming to their decisions.

This is not to deny that there was a negotiated quality about the decision reached. Had a completely uncanvassed or unilateral decision been made by management, then the outcome would doubtless have been different. Indeed, the issue may never have surfaced and no changes at all would have taken place. As it was the management members are responsive to the motions of the scheme. Once started it is a factor that cannot be totally disregarded in the decision making process. To be seen to be taking note of the participation machinery becomes a part of managers managerial obligations. It is a means of displaying managerialness to be seen to act within the corpus of participation. Managerial language now requires that things be cast within the linguistic frame of participation. Such obligations become a pressure on the managers and has an influence on how decisions are justified and talked about. However the way participation is defined is crucial in this regard. Since it is defined in ways that suspends it in solution with other, more traditional modes of managerial talk and practice; each decision, each action, comes from the chemistry of that mix. Managers are not put in a position where decisions are pure in the element of participation. There is always the presence of the admixture with other, traditional components. Participation is added to the compound: and not even as a catalyst, more as a mere colouring agent that tints the compound with a subtle fresh hue, but does not alter the chemical structure of the compound. All answers, all justifications can reference habitual aspects of managerial practice. The conflation is total in this sense.

Participation is different only to the extent of being supplement, and then only just. Participation runs into what has gone before, what has always been. To slip from out of the participation mode does not require a change, a gear shift, merely a side step: not even that, the merest slide and the colours run.

The reps. had come to expect participation to be something other. They had felt that they had done the work, that they had made a choice, that they had made a decision. But clearly they did not understand how things were done. They had fatally separated participation from those other ways of doing things. They had not understood that those other ways continued. They had not read properly the text that said that participation does not interfere with normal channels and procedures. They had thought that only applied to the relationships in their own departments. Participation was seen to lie over those old ways, to supplant them and have priority whereas in fact the reverse was the case. Outside of the departments in the wider affairs of the company, things were preceding as before. Participation had not affected the financial control of the company, it had not percolated into the marketing functions, it had no noticeable affect on corporate decisions or the executive arrangements, and so on. Even in terms of scale the company was a lake into which a pipette of participation had been dripped.

The reps. were made aware that they were after all, only, and still, shop-floor workers, they did not comprehend the machinations of capital acquisitions, the submission of RCA's, the operations of the high-powered technical committee. In their small-mindedness they had fallen under the illusion that their preferences were the only consideration, thus further confirming that they had failed to grasp the realities of the higher forms of organisational life.

Managers need to consider, expertly, matters of time-cost analysis, to place things in a wider context where monumental decisions took two or more years to come to fruition. That is the scope of the cognitive ability of those who aspire to managerial decision-making. Participation is one thing, but these other wider, complex factors are something else. These things are the real essence of company life as seen through the eyes of those who really have to make the decisions. They had continued to be a major consideration of company life and would continue to be so. In the heady spirit of participation it seems the reps. had forgotten.

The reps. had soberly and honestly toiled to canvass opinion and to consider options. They thought they had been promised what they had asked for. The preference they had made would be implemented, because that was how participation worked; was it not? But not: it became clear through this issue that the management's definition of participation did not include the making of decisions by the working groups. Particularly where there was the possibility of some expenditure. On this definition the reps. were allowed to canvass the opinions of their members and to put forward their preference, but this in no way binds the management to adhere to that preference. A decision will be made with the reference to that preference, but it will be made outside the group and with reference to other criteria. The issue was pushed outside of the direct auspices of the group quite early on. The reps. had thought that that was legitimate, since it was recognised that the engineers had the necessary expertise to progress things. But they did not appreciate that they had lost control of the issue; they did not realise that they had forfeited the right to make the decision or at least to contribute directly to it. It

had not been clear to them that the issue must go to the managing directors technical committee and that the final decision rests with them. They did not appreciate that that was how things were (still) done.

Management had returned the issue to the established hierarchical procedures to which participation was a mere adjunct. They were able to draw from that network of enclosed meanings by which participation is caste as not disrupting existing procedures and arrangements and the 'normal' way of doing things. The fact that that meaning had originally emerged in the context of intra-departmental relations was by the way. It was not seen to invalidate the invocation of that meaning in this context.

Mark was remarkably dogged in his pursuit of the management in this case and succeeded at least in forcing them to make explicit some of these, hitherto, more latent definitions. He was aware of the mood of his men. He knew what they had expected and that they would respond negatively to the way the thing had been handled. Kerrick is made to realise that these pressures exist and aware that his duties now include the maintenance of participation and at least a verbal show of conforming to the letter of participation. He begins to modify his tone and attempt to be more accomodating. But he knows that the decision is out of his hands to a degree and that other people have made their minds up. Mark will not let the bone drop however. Kerrick again retreats behind the inevitability of bureaucratic procedure and his own powerlessness in the face of it. Mark relents and suggests that for all members present a face-saving compromise is required. But his language is still aggressive; referring to the 'needs' of the men and the 'wants' of the management. Kerrick

points to the difficulty of his own position and the obligation on him to justify decisions within his sphere of influence in traditional managerial forms that go beyond the language of participation. His language outside of the direct realms of departmental participation must inhabit the traditional groups of organisational accountability. Participation has not changed that for him either. Macheath, ever eager to display his grasp of reality, supports Kerrick. 'People in this world can't just have what they want, we all know that. As family men, and generally responsible citizens you, the workers, all know that in reality there are always other considerations, other people to take into account, other factors that may not immediately have occured to you.' The manager as expert, being in the position he is in, is better able to appreciate the full extent of those other obligations. The shop-floor staff, however noble they may be are not familiar with that world and cannot fail to have a blinkered view of what is going on.

The men's fears were confirmed at the next meeting. Despite promises of further consultation it became readily apparent that the decision had been taken some time ago. The men were informed that they were to get some new facilities but not the preference they had pushed for. They were told by Macheath that there may have been some mis-handling and that they perhaps should have involved engineering earlier, but now at least something was being done.

Macheath: "****(the project engineer) took account of the views of your people when he submitted his RCA. The proposal that has been agreed is to modify the existing area. There will be the provision of a micro-wave oven. Obviously we are aware of some of the views on that but we consulted our canteen people and got good advice from them.

I asked Edmund to report back...and Mark, but he's been away on holiday so Mark hasn't given me any feed-back - but Edmund has - the important thing for him was to get something done - the placement was not that important."

The management now acknowledge openly that they have taken-over the issue. Macheath refers to 'we', indicating people outside the group and indexing the management oligarchy. When he says that 'the proposal that has been agreed' he is referring to the technical committee and the engineering personnel. He also draws on other expert opinion to bolster his position: he has sought the advice of the canteen staff and they have advised in favour of the micro-wave oven. The issue is well out of the hands of the shop-floor reps. now and is in the possession of the habitual decision decision makers. The reps. seem tired of the contest and realise the futility of challenging the major decision at this stage. However, they do begin to nibble at the edges.

Edmund: "The problem I've got is that the men don't want the micro-wave oven...they are dead against it. I mean it won't toast, it won't boil milk. That's the only problem I've got."

Macheath: "That's interesting...look we did seek opinion on this, we asked the canteen people and they definitely advised us that the micro-wave is OK for what we have in mind.
I recently, personally had an opportunity to look at a micro-wave - there is a lot of flexibility and a lot of smoothness about them."

Edmund: "Yes, but will it do the things we want it to...I don't think so."

Macheath: "Well it does lots of things...I had roast beef and three veg. out of it."

Tom: "But our blokes don't have things like that."

Edmund: "It's things like soup...you know.... toasted sandwiches...boiled milk and all things like that."

Kerrick points out that the company have hired a machine so they can test out how it performs before purchasing one of their own. He also points again to some of its advantages: its cleanliness, its space saving capacity. But the reps. are waiting to have their say.

Mathew: "The general view of the shift is...uh... that they are absolutely disgusted with the way this has been done. They felt that it had been decided ages ago that we didn't want it and now you're just bulldozing it through."

(Macheath begins to speak but Kirknatch intervenes)

Kirknatch: "Hang on let's get the views out from around the table."

Mathew: "They all want the conventional old cooker."

Roger: "My group are a 100% against it...they are very disappointed with the way things are...have been done.
There has been no participation really, not from the shop-floor people...not into the actual decisions that have been made."

The reps. had remained quiet until the first person had spoken and Kirknatch had created the opportunity, but it became clear that members were not only disgruntled with the fact that the micro-wave was not what they wanted, they were also expressing the view that the whole thing had not been handled properly and that they felt that they had not really participated. Management wanted to concentrate on the first problem and ignore the latter, but were prevented to some extent from doing so by Kirknatch.

Macheath: "People might think that Mike and I have a bee in our bonnet about micro-wave ovens.. but what we did ask was the expert opinion of the canteen personnel, and a catering company and we said "given this situation what would you advise?' and they said micro-wave oven."

Mark: "And on our side we got the opinion of experienced, expert shift workers, if you like...and that's their opinion."

Kerrick: "Perhaps, Mark we can go through the disadvantage side..."

Mark: (angrily) "Before we do that we ought to look at the advantagees of the conventional one."

(There is some debate about the relative pro's and cons of the two in terms of space saving, neatness etc.)

Cecil: "The real problem was Edmund's - it won't toast cheese and so on."

Edmund: "Will it boil milk for instance."

Kerrick: "Uhh...I don't know, but..."

Macheath: "I don't know but I think so."

The discussion continues as to what it can and can't do. Kerrick admits that they do not have all the facts, but they can check it out; they are only hiring the machine so there is no outlay that can't be handled. There is a need to check out all this information. "So that means another four week delay I suppose" intones Mathew.

Despite the supposed research, the management staff are still unable to provide the information that is of concern to the workforce. The criteria for assessing the worth of the machine had clearly been those for management. We have witnessed before how the determination of criteria and the means of evaluation can be controlled and play a crucial part in any definitional process. The reps.

are clearly disgruntled and are under pressure from their men. The issue of how the decision was reached does not receive a full airing even though it lies just below the surface, and despite the efforts of the consultants. But the reps. are quite prepared to force the secondary issue of the suitability of the micro-wave oven with some vigour.

It is decided to arrange a demonstration and some of the reps. are delegated to witness it: Mark is included but retorts in a somewhat surly tone that "It's not my problem - the facts have got to be put to the men."

A little later, prompted by the consultants the group run through a review and self-analysis of the whole issue.

Mark: "The way the thing has gone it's destroyed quite a lot of confidence in these participation meetings. And it must be said... its true that we could probably have got the same facility without coming to this group...I mean through some normal channels."

Kerrick: "I agree it could have gone that way Mark, but the advantage of this is that things are out on the table, we've got all the opinions out. It may have taken longer - but over all I think this is a good thing."

Mark: "The thing is that this has destroyed confidence. They say "Oh I told you in December it wouldn't be any good."

Edmund: "Yeah. You do get that reaction."

Mark: "It could have happened on any issue really, people are asking just what are they participating in."

Kircknatch: "Don't you think that you've had more influence on this issue than you would have had through normal channels?"

Mark: "No, not really."

Cecil: "Oh I think I disagree...particularly from the point of view of time. Through normal channels you may have got some meagre facilities. I have found that a lot of issues have come forward that would not have done without participation."

Kirknatch was of the opinion that the group members, as well as having some allegience to their members might also have some allegience to the group itself. That decisions made by the group are, or should be collective decisions that each rep. has the responsibility of selling to his/her membership. It was an approach he was trying to encourage with the other groups. The reps. need to be more active: to take greater initiative vis-a-vis their membership.

Despite the soul-searching and the self-flagellation, the credibility of the group had suffered a severe set-back. The attitude of the people on the shop-floor was extremely negative when I spoke to them at about this time. As indicated earlier, there has always been a fair measure of scepticism about the scheme; but recent events had only served to confirm those views.

There were those who had noticed more differences, some improvements. A number, for instance, maintained that there had been an improvement in communications. But just as many, if not more, were of the opinion that nothing had really happened, that there had been no noticeable change. These responses are recognisable to the reader. Indeed, there is not much to distinguish the responses of this group to those of the packaging membership.

On the issue of canteen facilities there was universal condemnation. Below are some typical comments made shortly after the meeting just reported.

Operative: "From what we have heard from people, it seems that what we wanted and what we are doing to get are two different things."

Operative: "Yeah. The whole thing was cut and dried - the engineers decided .... what was easiest for them. We didn't really have a choice."

Operative: "We've come round to the idea of the micro-wave oven...we don't really care about that... that wasn't the real issue, it's the actual facilities, the room, etc."

Operative: "The Nouella Nace room, that's what we wanted...we didn't get the alternative we wanted."

Operative: "That's this company all over...something important costing five pounds and they uhm and ah...but something costing thousands that nobody wants, they do."

Ops.: "It's all talk and noise"/"I personally think that nobody's got any confidence in it"/ "We need to see something actual concrete done."/ "What have we actually achieved eh?"

Operative: "It shouldn't be like this...if things are wrong then you should be able to tell the manager and get it fixed...without waiting every month."

Operative: "If the company are so keen on participation you'd think they'd put more effort in - especially with this canteen business, because that's important for the shift workers."

One can gauge something of the mood on the shop-floor from this. But there was a still greater feeling of apathy and disinterest. There was also a sense of 'I told you so'. Having invested no effort in the scheme, and having decried its motivation and purpose, many individuals were now happy to sit back and wallow in self congratulation at seeing the scheme in difficulty. The consultants spent quite a lot of time trying to energise the group; to get them to be prepared to keep pushing for what they wanted.

One of the reps. offered to tape record his post-meeting meeting in my absence and the reaction of that group to the report of the last meeting is perhaps the most revealing. A sizable chunk of the exchange is reported below. In the first instance the rep. gave a fairly thorough debriefing of the discussion that took place. He points out that the micro-wave oven is only on trial and that if it doesn't work out they could revert to the old one:

Operative: "Can't we have them both."

Mark: "Uhm..I doubt it...doubt it...I don't know, we didn't really follow that up... to have both..."

Op.: "Dahh, they obviously don't want that cooker in at all do they?"

Op.: "They don't want the cooker."

Ops.:(several) "No, no."

(Mark explains further about the debate relating to the pros and cons of the micro-wave with some comments of his own. There is then some discussion of the plans that Mark has brought in from engineering, showing just what is intended.)

Op.: "One sink and one cupboard...they haven't really gone to any great expense on our behalf have they?"

Op.: "You still haven't got any work top have you?"

Mark: "Yes, there is."

Op.: "Where?"

Mark: "On top of the fridge."

(Laughter)

Op.: "It says on the plan - 'fridge underneath'."

Mark: "Yeah. Worktop with fridge underneath it... then a cupboard with a micro-wave on it."

Op.: "So we got less worktop than we've got now?"

Mark: "I don't know what the area is...it may be... I don't know..."

Op.: "It's only as wide as the fridge innit."

(Laughter)

(Mark tries to bring up the fact that the group had been critical of the way the issue was handled but he is interrupted:)

Op.: (to no one in particular) "Whose ideas was it to use this as the kitchen?"

Mark: (quizically) "What?"

Op.: "This kitchen."

Mark: "Not really."

(unintelligible mutterings over each other)

Mark: "They said that if they got an oven it would be locked...put a lock on it."

Op.: "Then when it breaks down they'll blame it onto us."

Op.: "The ordinary oven is very difficult to break...."

Mark: "Yeah. As I said...we did have a lot of discussion about the way the thing has been handled...and I, I told them that I thought that really we could have just gone to Tom in the normal course of events and say we weren't happy with the canteen and he could have seen Cecil - Cecil could have seen Kerrick and they could have sorted it out themselves without us going through it... because in the end it's been more or less cut and dried on their half...what they wanted...irrespective of all the discussions we've had."

Op.: "They've done it...they've done their own decision."

Mark: "Yeah. So...uhh...there was a little bit of an argument about that, the people from the University said that...uhm...at least, at least there had been discussions on it...you know...whether it had been worthwhile in the end or not....I wasn't sure..."

Op.: "You can talk to a brick wall all day... don't mean it's going to get out of your way...its the same old thing...they can have what they want."

Mark: "Well...I mean...well it has turned out like that."

Op.: "So...so why not just pack it in...and let them put it in and have done with it. We came up with all the...you...know... we was going to have it up here in that room...nice big place built down the stairs and...all those ideas...and they've just gone and stuck some piddling little sink in by the window."

"CONTESTS IN MEANING : THE RHETORIC OF PARTICIPATION"

VOLUME II

ROBERT IAN WESTWOOD

PART V

CONTROLLING PARTICIPATION

INTRODUCTION

The preceding sections have attempted to portray the development of the participation scheme at Tridy. Particular focus has been placed on the talk of members in which various meanings were constructed and entered the public domain, but other pragmatic features of the development have been incorporated for the sake of completing the account. It stands, then, as an extended case study of a participation exercise.

Thus far the description of the events has been foregrounded with what analysis there has been lying somewhat in the background. From here that is reversed. Some of the theoretical notions outlined in Part I, that have continued to work dynamically with the data, come more overtly to the fore with the data used more illustratively.

What follows are perhaps most appropriately conceived as a series of inter-related essays that work a common theme. They, initially, attempt to articulate the signifying process by which the meanings around participation are controlled and presented in particular ways at the service of particular interests. They, then, also attempt to explore the partial success and then the failure of that practice and to articulate some of the ground and the practices by which it can be challenged.

So in relation to Tridy there is a situation where a new term is introduced into the discourse, the meaning of which is uncertain at the outset. The meanings that could accrue to the notion of participation are potentially multiple at least: the meanings have a potentiality to proliferate. The fresh associations and relationships that may be formed will impinge on existing relations in the discourse with the consequent possibility that the original discourse be altered. If the meanings are allowed to emerge willy-nilly without control, there

is the risk that the newness will subvert and disrupt existing relations. The potential for uncontrolled and unguided change is present in the situation and needs to be guarded against. Thus there are attempts to control the meaning; to guide and direct the formation of relationships with other new items and with those already present in the discourse. These attempts will be aimed at protecting existing features of the extant discourse from the potentially revolutionary influence of the new term. Participation with its potential for proliferation, is in a position to disrupt and subvert what is already established if it is allowed free range. From the very start it mounts a threat to certain relations of dominance, control, the right to punish, the right to unilateral decisions and so on. Its entrance into the discourse could expose and make naked those, usually subdued, features of the discourse. The potential to form fresh and untried relationships means that the meaning of existing terms in the discourse might become tainted and corrupted. A shift in the nature of the relationships could conceivably radically change the whole nature of the discourse within the company. On some perspectives such a radical change is to be desired and to be aimed for. For others it represents a threat to certain vested interests and power positions.

There will be, then, some attempt to control the meanings that emerge: the potential proliferation of 'participation' will be curtailed and watched over. The associations it is allowed to form with other items in the existing discourse will be harnessed in particular ways; in ways that attempt to preserve features of the existing discourse. There will be attempts to integrate the new term into those established relationships and to prevent new ones being formed that are disruptive and radically shift the temper of the discourse.

The most obvious and fundamental way of beginning to achieve that control is to interpolate distinctive definitions of one's own construction. 'Participation' is then defined in particular ways. It is put into specific syntagmatic relation to other items that begin to establish a particular texture of meaning. The meanings that begin to emerge are then presented as the meanings; the associations created as the correct ones. The productivity of the signifier 'participation' is censured ; its natural right to form relations ad lib is denied. The theoretical plurality of the term is harnessed by the practical accomplishment of closure. A particular set of relationships are constructed that bind the term into a defined texture of meaning.

It is a function of rhetoric then to present those particular relations and that texture of meaning as natural and obvious. The definitions put forward must assume a position of priority. They must propose themselves as the only feasible and acceptable formulation; at least in that context. They must be made to appear to provide a natural order and sensibleness to that about which they are said to speak. The version on offer must so occupy the linguistic space in the discourse, such that it appears as the final, authoritative and absolute one. Only by doing so can it so colonise that territory in the discourse and lay a claim to it that effectively prevents the invasion of other, potentially revolutionary other versions. An effective rhetoric completely fills the space and establishes boundaries such that the interjection of alternatives that are severely challenging are seen as heretical, misplaced,bad, mad. Better still, the boundaries are so clearly and tightly drawn that alternatives are not even perceived above the stockade. Part of this is to so construct the relationships in the new discourse that all likely questions relating to it can be answered by circulating within the boundaries of the discourse without

the need for recourse beyond it. One may even so control the discourse such that the likely questions themselves are controlled by the texture of the discourse. This is still apart of the disguising of alternatives. Questions that are likely to require a search beyond the established discourse are dependent upon some conception of an alternative formulation. The effective exclusion of alternatives would ensure that not only answers circulate within the discourse but that the questions do too.

A socially critical practice seeks to confront this process of closure, to reveal its processes and strategies. I have already spent a good deal of time describing those definitions that did emerge and were proposed. I have also given some attention, though incomplete, to the nature of the rhetoric in which those definitions were couched. The obligation now is to further explicate those processes by which the definitions were constructed and put forward, to examine the rhetoric and its effectiveness in ensuring that those definitions are taken as sensible and adequate. More specifically this practice would seek to locate those points to which meaning is pursued; those points in the discourse to which the search for a warrant for the meanings on offer is traced; the point at which there is an accepted final guarantee of meaning. It's job is also to examine the effectiveness of the discourse and the rhetoric in which the definitions are presented. Are the definitions accepted as feasible and authoritative and why? Does the texture of meaning constructed fully occupy the linguistic space in the discourse and prevent the emergence of awkward and challenging alternatives? At what points, if any, does the project fail; at what point does the rhetoric fail to present the meanings as natural and obvious? At what point does the rhetoric cease to hold back the presence of alternative definitions that enter the discourse

in challenging ways, and how are these coped with when they emerge? The critical practice should locate the contradictions and omissions in the espoused project. Those points where the figural fails to mask the particularity and ideologically guided nature of the meanings put forward. Where the rhetoric no longer hides the effort that has been made to control meaning to construct specific definitions and to expel others. Its purpose is to re-reveal that which has been repressed and masked by the rhetoric; what, in the 'closure' of meaning has been 'cast-off-limits'. What alternatives have been by-passed or repressed and how that is achieved?

A more cautious, uncertain and contentious aim is to relate these processes to ideology. The root of this would lie in the view that, as all discourse is ultimately rhetorical, so all rhetoric is ideologically informed. But a particular view of ideology is employed on that basis, as has already been suggested and which will be further explored as we proceed. It is at this point too that we encounter Foucault's project and the place of discourse in the will to power and to the relations of power in the company.

CHAPTER 1

PARTICIPATION AS TEXT

It had occurred to me at an earlier stage to give this thesis a title such as 'The meaning of participation'. But, of course, there is no single, identifiable and unitary meaning that can be gleaned from the events at Tridy. There aren't even 'meanings' in the sense of a coherently categorizable grouping of meanings arrangeable in taxonomic form. However, it can scarcely be said that there are not certain meanings apparent in the context of participation at Tridy; I have disclosed many in the preceding sections. But what is the nature of those meanings, and what are their relations? I would assert that their nature is primarily textual. Intending to locate and lay before the reader a meaning of participation, or a structure of meanings; static, total, enclosed: I have instead engaged a text.

General Text

In this regard it is important to note that 'text' is not simply a higher level of linguistic arrangement above the sentence; it is not, in that sense, a glorified sentence extended in size. Indeed, texts are of varying size; they are not determinable, definable and identifiable in terms of their size. Clause, sentence, paragraph, brief verbal exchange, tracts of written prose; all could conceivably be characterised as text. But at the same time, text is a discursive unit at a higher level than the sentence. Text too, is a relational concept on a number of fronts. Texts are most definitely concerned with meaning; it is in relation, to a degree, to what might be termed the semantic level of the broader linguistic system. Text is a realisation from the semantic system. It might be said that text is in relation to the semantic system in the same way that the clause is in relation

to the lexicogrammatical system, and the syllable is to the phonological system. However, these systems should not be thought of in simple combinatorial form. The larger units are not mere summations of the smaller units. There is a difference of nature. The relationship is realisational; an arrangement of phonemes realises a particular lexicogrammatical element, just as a sentence is a realisation of a specific lexicogrammatical patterning. But the meaning potential of each realisation is radically different. There is a type of Gestalt here, where the whole is different in nature to the sum of its parts. But even then the text should not be thought of, even notionally, as the sum of a series of sentences. As Todorov states:

> "The notion of text is not situated on the same plane as that of the sentence .. in this sense, the text must be distinguished from the paragraph, the typographic unit of several sentences. The text may coincide with a phrase or with an entire book..." (T. Todorov. 1979. p294).

(Todorov is here converned with a purely literary semiotics.)

If we are interested in meanings, and their production, encountered in interaction and everyday social intercourse, then we are concerned with language as discourse and text. The linguist may legitimately remain at the level of the phoneme, or even the sentence, but the most appropriate level of analysis of meanings for everyday spoken language is that of text or discourse. Social meanings are not taken as being realised in the form of sentences or other lexicogrammatical units; another level of analysis is required and it is that necessity that has led to the development of the notion of text. The same movement occurred in literature with the advent of discourse analysis following Saussure, and the recognition that the sentence offered only limited scope.

Text is a concept of process; as with all processual notions there is some difficulty in discussing it since it evades concrete

demonstration. To structure and fix text in any way so as to make it accessible in a fashion that pretends to enable one to indicate a concrete phenomenon and declare ' this is an instance of text', would be to destroy its nature as text. It is the same problem encountered with all processual conceptualisations. It is the reason (or part of the reason) why I must fail to present the reader with the meaning of participation.

It helps to consider text from the point of view of what it is not. In this regard some clarity is provided by the work of those who consider text from the point of view of literary criticism, whilst bearing in mind that there are certain similarities of an elemental nature between the movement embodied in this stage in the development of literary criticism and the development of the methods and thinking about sociological interpretation.

The reader is referred here specifically to some of the foundational statements about what text is not encapsulated in the work of Roland Barthes, and most notably in his essays: "From Work to Text" (1977), and "Theory of the Text" (1981). These (texts) are primarily concerned with a re-examination of the relations between author - the written - and the reader, and to overcome some of the problems of the distinctions drawn between reading and writing. The more detailed aspects of that project need not concern us here. However, the point is made there that 'text' is not in correspondence with a concrete, identifiable object such as a book. A 'work' is of this nature; a solid object locatable on the bookshelf; referable to as discrete, complete, whole.

> "While the work is held in the hand, the text is held in language: it exists only as discourse ... Text is experienced only in an activity of production."
> (Barthes. 1977. p157)

From the point of view of literary criticism the urge for the introduction of the notion of text was hurried in by that movement of literary analysis, that, with the same abberation and arrogance spawned 'Modernism', came to be called New Criticism. That movement represented a significant reaction to, what we, by their tyranny, must now refer to as 'old criticism'. Old criticism was particularly castigated for what was seen as an over-concern with points of analysis that were distinctly extra-textual. That is, it was conceived as a literary analytic that discovered its points of reference in such arenas beyond the text as the author's biography, the author's psychology and/or the positioning of his work within a (specifically) literary history. The meaning of the text would not fully unfold itself without due deference to such extra-textual features.

It should be noted that such a conception of literary criticism is still rife. Texts (or perhaps rather 'works') are still 'explained' by reference to the author's biography, his personal critical incidents, by what is assumed to be his psychological make-up. The voracious panning of dead author's correspondence for nuggets of event and psychological slips-of-the-tongue, for details of deviant psycho-sexual neuroses, for childhood trauma and so on, continues apace. And each new 'find' is pounced on with glee, is pawed over and sifted until it is made to fit into the developing total picture of the 'man and his times'. Themes of personal history and Freudian insights are welded onto the author's work to provide 'fresh' (or usually confirmatory) meanings. The reader only need examine contemporary book reviews located in the press to discover for herself such allusions.

In broad terms, both the early Barthes (Eddie Waring come back) and the New Critics were reacting against a critical practice that asserted:

(i) the authority of the author over the text,

(ii) a conception of meaning as prior to expression,

(iii) which implies the confinement of a single, unitary, immutable meaning to somewhere other than the text itself.

If we are to accept the basic tenets of Saussurean conceptions of meaning which locates it in a non-positive relation of differences, then already such notions of a critical practice are anathema.

When Barthes declares the "Death of the Author" (1977) he is engaging in a wider philosophical movement that decentres the subject from the heart of an epistemology of meaning and language. But at a more basic level he is writing about the relation between the author - the text - and the reader. He is declaring then, that the author cannot be held as the final arbiter of the meaning of the text. The text belongs in the public domain of discourse and not to the author. A speaking (or a writing) commits what is said to the public domain, they move outside of the control of the author. They become, in a sense, free property, available to anyone who will take them up and invest them with meaning. It makes little sense to pursue the author for guidance as to the meaning of the text; to pursue his background, his psychology, his intention.

D. Silverman makes a similar point in his championing of account analysis and the regressive task of attempting to locate, in his study, the supposed actual reasons and psychological state of selectors at the point at which they are said to make decisions. Silverman and the ethnomethodologists accept the possibility of the indefinite proliferation of meanings in relation to accounts of social events. They maintain that the indefinite elaboration of accounts is only resolvable by the employment of 'practices' that reproduce order and unity, those practices being related to the practical purposes in particular contexts. There is undoubtedly a pragmatic requirement to

provide authoritative accounts, especially in organisational settings. That requirement is satisfied, it is claimed, by the reliance on various procedures to 'close' the potentially infinite features of any interaction. Procedures such as 'rules' of the kind; 'let it pass', 'enough is enough' and the 'etcetera clause' (see Garfinkel 1967). In Silverman's study (1973) the mark sheets completed by selectors stand, for organisational purposes, as authoritative accounts:

> "They stand as displays of the rational accountability of selection decisions by providing the 'grounds' for any decision.."
> "Yet for analytical purposes .. (they) are not to be confused with the determination of the selection outcome. The point in time at which the selection decision is made and the grounds for making it (appearance, first impressions etc.) are irremovably linked to the context in which they occur. To discover such grounds would imply a research design in which the selectors had to tape their thoughts during the unfolding of the interview. But even here one would be getting accountably rational 'reasons' for decisions rather than the thoughts (and hence decisions) themselves. The mark sheets, used by selectors, then, demonstrate that their activities are in accord-with-a-rule; they do not report on the grounds of the decision as it was made." (p90)

Silverman's way out of the dilemma is to treat accounts, not as epiphenomena, but as analysable aspects of interactions in their own right (a point concurred with by R. Harre in much of his work. See for example Harre 1979, 1977 and 1972. And by Lyman and Scott 1968); and by reference to the ethnomethodological concept of indexicality (Garfinkel 1967; and for discussion of the issue of indexicality see Abercrombie (1974); Barnes and Law (1976); O'Keefe (1979); Heritage (1977); Phillips (1978) and Coulter (1971)). Silverman is concerned, then, with the actual content of accounts in use and not in some supposed reality, prior in time, to which they are said to refer. The ethnomethodologists are interested in the 'natural' properties of indexical expressions that of themselves ensure that the indefinite

elaboration of meaning is closed and a sense of order given to the interaction. In both cases the interest is far less on the intending individual than in the language in use and the sense of meaning and order being interactionally accomplished. There is a slight shift away from the conceptions of the Symbolic Interactionists and the phenomenologists in that regard. The conception of meaning that informs this thesis shares in that movement that seeks to avoid the logocentrism that reinstates the intending subject back to the heart of meaning. The phenomenologists, as Derrida (1973) points out in his deconstruction of Husserl, ultimately rely upon an intentionality that reintroduces the human consciousness back into the theory of meaning, and thus returns to the old problems of idealism and metaphysics.

The attack on the notion of authorship (which incidentally, is itself a notion of decidedly historical moment; one not of relevence, for instance, in the Middle Ages) is part of this wider decentreing movement the philosophical arguments for which need not concern us here. (The reader is referred particularly to the works of Derrida - but a similar movement is found in the the work of Lacan, Kristeva and to a degree in Althusser.) It is also a rejection of the notion of ownership; the notion that the author "owns" the words and the meanings and continues to exert dictatorial control over them. Rather greater admiration is found for the attitude encapsulated in Mallarme's dictum, 'cede the initiative to the words'. It is, in a simple sense, the words that we understand; it is the signifiers and their relations of difference that gives the possibility of meaning - not a speaking or writing subject. Mallarme, of course, is one of those modernist writers who deliberately set out to efface their own authorship, their own presence in the text. A rather burlesque example of such effacement is found among the work of those Dadaist and Surrealist writers

who deny the attribution of an origin by making the writing a combined and/or arbitrary effort. It should be noted that this is also part of the project of Blum et al (1974), with their 'collectivist' writing.

The conception of the author as the owner and Father of the text has implications for the nature of the relationship between author and reader, and between reading and writing - and by extension, between speaker and hearer. In concurrence with other societal values it tends to entail relations of obligation, of rights and respect. As Father, the author's position vis-a-vis his text must be respected. It is his progeny. We must respect the product of his care and creation. In a neo-Freudian way, references to the text are illuminated by references to the Father; what moves the Father, moves the text. If we understand the Father, we understand the text. There are intimations of patriarchal tyranny here. In a more direct sense Machery (1966) has made much of the author's position in the world of material production and exchange. For him attention should be paid to the mode of production of the text, and the activity performed on raw materials and prefigured elements that are constructed into a product by the writer-as-worker.

The primacy of the author also creates an obligation on the reader to respect the author and his declared or supposed intentions for the text. By ceding authority to the author, the reader places herself in the position of passive consumer. The reader expects the author to know her own text absolutely, and to present it to the reader complete with the meaning that the author intended. The rights of the author and the respect of the author-text relation leads the reader to not expect to find anything in the text other than that which is placed in it by the author. And here is the crux of the matter. The meaning of the text is held to be instilled in the work by the author. The meaning of the text precedes the text, being in some way prefigured in

the mind of the author who transcribes it onto the page. The meaning is thereby said to be permanently and immutably fixed in the work; complete, final and absolute. The author places the meaning in the text, he is the final arbiter and guarantor of the meaning of the text. Hence any disputations as to what was intended by the work are resolvable by reference back to the author; to his history, his personality, his intentions and so on. The author is made responsible for providing the ultimate grounds for the explanation, not only of the serial content of the narrative, but also for any transformation, distortion or modification that appears in the text. Furthermore, as originator, the author is also held responsible for a secondary assumption made from the traditional perspective. That is, the text is said to exhibit a unity (even a range of works by the same author are), an internal coherence and one-ness, the cause of which is the author herself. Thus any apparent paradoxes, contradictions, or other aberrations are resolved by reference back to some supposed authorial scheme. The, for some, natural points of difference and contradiction in the text are seen as ultimately resolvable if the author's intended scheme can be unravelled. Resistance to any such smoothing-out, and the resiliance of contradiction, is still referable to the author. The 'play' of language is reduced to some moral or psycho-sexual dilemmas in the author; or more simply to a lapse of skill.

In the works of so-called classic realist literature that were the prime target of the New Critics, the author, or implied author (say as narrator) takes the reader on a journey through the text and reveals the meaning at the denouement of the plot. Reader and author converge at some point on the truth and meaning of the text. The plot is resolved, the enigma revealed, and the message conveyed. It relies on a traditional conception of meaning and communication. The sender (author) selects the appropriate medium for the meanings in his head

and transmits the 'message' untrammeled to a passive recipient who is magically finely tuned to receive the message as transmitted in its pure form. The activity is the author's; the readers are passive consumers.

The notion of 'text' decentres the author and profoundly alters the author-text-reader relationship. The construction of meaning cannot be thought of in terms of a simplistic communications theory. It is no longer a simple process by which the author 'depicts' or represents some feature of reality that the reader passively receives. As Barthes puts it: "a text is not a line of words releasing a simple 'theological' meaning (the message of the Author-God)" (1977.p146). The text itself is a site of productivity from which meanings continue to emerge; the text operates as a message, or messages, in and of itself, and not purely as a medium. The meaning(s) (or message) in the text need not be located in the intentions of the author, for indeed it is the case that the meaning(s) move beyond the control of the author.

The traditional conceptions of the writer-reader relationship, the respect for the authority of the author, and the accompanying theory of communication form part of a wider philosophical conception of expressive realism. The consideration of the texts of literary classic realism are of significance for they provide aesthetic support for that ideology. In literary terms it is a tradition that goes back as far as Aristotle and his conception of art as mimesis. It has continued to the present day. A text, on this view, represents 'reality'; it communicates a sense of truth to the reader. The genesis of that truth is something anterior to the text itself, usually located in the conscious of an intending author. The positing of that sort of relationship between text and author forces a reading of the text and a method of closing it. The authority of the author implies that the search for the warrant and the origin of the meaning of the

text travels beyond the text, but need only be taken as far as the intentions of the author. The author is the origin - the reduction to the origin is as far as one can, or needs to go. Arrival at that point is said to provide the grounds for the discovery of unequivocal statements about the meaning of the text. An authorial authority, then, serves to close off the text, to provide the grounds for an unequivocal formulation; a 'right' interpretation that can foreclose on the potential proliferation of meanings and other interpretations.

Although the meaning of the text is held to be there, implanted irredeemably in the text, there is also the implication that it is not always readily apparent. The message is in some way secret. And indeed, in literary terms, its sense of secrecy is in part a measure of its status as literature. It is apparent that there is an implicit notion that it is in the very nature of literature to speak of those things that cannot, or will not be said with absolute lucidity. The author is, in a sense, not permitted to divulge his interpretation of the meaning of the work, for to do so would be to undermine the import of his original project since, if he could have expressed the meaning he intended in the original text in this other, more lucid manner, then he should have done so in the first place; the interpretation devalues the original. The message is held to be there, but not always with the obviousness of a hotel's fire regulations; the medium itself necessitates a partial opacity.

The notion of the secret in the text returns us to the notions of hermeneutical interpretation; in its traditional sense at least. Here a meaning is held to be embedded in the text although deep and obscure and requiring an act of interpretation to gain an understanding of that meaning. Even in its most sophisticated versions, say in the work of Ricoeur where he too urges "The model of the text: meaningful action considered as a text" (Ricoeur 1971), there remains the supposition that there is a single discoverable meaning and a reliance

on the notion of intentionality. It is the contention of David Silverman and Brian Torode (1980) that even the documentary method of Garfinkel (1967) embodies the last vestiges of this traditon of interpretation.

The critic; as sociological interpreter, or as literary critic, participates and colludes with those conceptions of meaning and communication in pursuing meaning in the traditional mode. The secrecy, or the opacity of the text requires the remedial work of the critic to enable the less privileged reader to gain access to the real truth of the text. The critic here, like so many other 'experts' acting professionally, exploits a gap between the productive process and the exchange process. As intermediary he excavates the meaning embedded in the text and seeks to present to the naive public the message in its true, original and unitary form. There is a collusion in that he seeks for the unity and coherence in the text, for the single or structured meanings that are <u>in</u> the text, for the true representation of reality that he assumes the author invested in the work, albeit with a sophistication (since the truth is momentous and therefore obscure) that denies a ready and naive reading on all occasions. The critic will smooth over any contradictions in the text that threaten to subvert the supposed cohesion and linearity of the deliverence of the truth.

The critic positions himself as having a moral and professional obligation to re-present the work for those consumers who have a supposed difficulty unravelling the secret of the text. But he also has an obligation to the original manufacturer on whom he parasitically depends, so that still, any warrant for the eventual sense of the text must find its authority in the owner of the text; the author. All must still refer back to that originary point of the intending consciousness that locked the secret in the text in the first place.

M. Foucault, similarly, participates in that decentreing movement already alluded to. A part of his contribution is to refer to the author not as a concrete subjectivity but as an 'author-function'. The attribution of the title 'author' is applied in particular circumstances and serves to mark off a mode of discourse in particular ways, to position it in the realm of discourses and to provide it with a specific status, that reveals its 'mode of being'. The author is radically decentred, for now it becomes merely a mode of functioning of the discourse, one mode amongst others; a mere dimension of discourse rather than its central point of origin and its ultimate authority. It is further related outside of the discourse to "the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses" (Foucault1979).

The author-function operates here to recuperate and provide closure on the 'great danger with which fiction threatens our world'. Fiction at once both breaks the ground for our ordering of reality, our control over meaning, and, by its ideological confinement, at the same time regenerates and re-supports our established ways of knowing. This is so because discourse (including literature) is at once the ground on which the struggle for power is waged,the object of strategies of domination - and the means by which the struggle is fought out and accomplished. The inherent potentiality and productivity of language - its capacity to run loose from confinements of reason, of established sense, its ability to subvert and participate in revolution - establishes it as an object (? - practice) of fear; but also as the inevitable arena of struggle. It is in the genesis of the Word that man's frightening freedom is born, but also wherein lies the means of control and domination (the proximity of theological discourse here may well be not insignificant). The "cancerous and dangerous proliferation of meaning."

> "The author does not precede the works, he is a certain functional principle by which in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction."
> (1979. p159. my emphasis)

References to a subjective consciousness, or to matters of biography become anathema to the developed notion of text. The work should be examined for its own internal 'play' of textual features requiring no reference outside of the text for its warrant. A critical practice should not seek to recuperate the text by participating in a shared ideological underpinning whereby it retrieves a supposed unitary meaning from the text by reference back to some extra-textual source, and pretends to discover a representation of the truth about reality in the process. Nor should it repair texts where paradox, contradiction and inconsistencies appear, and attempt to restore the text to its supposed state of wholeness and coherence. Rather it should seek to reflect the polyphonous nature of the text, its complexity of meanings, its inherent contradiction and inconsistency and its reliance on the figural for its conveyance of sense. It should reveal the multiplicity of meanings in the text. And it should do this whilst avoiding slipping, as the New Critics did, into a new metalanguage, that asserts a privilege in relation to its own discursivity, or that rigidifies into an overly formal structuring/ Structuralism.

Barthes' "From Work to Text" (1977) is a kind of theoretical accompaniment to "S/Z" (1975) another of his seminal works. It is there that he treats of, what is ostensibly a simple text of expressive realism , namely Balsac's "Sarrasine". What Barthes attempts to show is that even such a text when pushed to the limits, reveals the inevitable way in which such texts transgress their own project and expose their own artiface. The textuality of the work is exposed and

the attempt in the work to maintain a closure on meaning is undone.

Barthes came to make an important distinction between what he termed 'lisible' (readable) work and scriptible (writable) text. He refers to an 'ecrivant' who produces a 'lisible' work - and an ecrivain, who produces a 'scriptible' text. A brief pursuit of these distinctions will help to bring to light some of the ground upon which the notion of text moves. It is clear that we are still in the area of the desire to reconsider the notion and nature of the reader-author relationship and the text-reader relationship, and more generally the distinctions drawn between reading and writing. The New Critics had ushered in a considerable shift in emphasis towards the reader. Indeed some theories of literature had come to appear synonomous with theories of reader behaviour/reading (for a contemporary summary see S. Suleiman and I. Crosman (ed.) (1980). Other protagonists who continue in this tradition include the work of Stanley Fish and from a slightly different angle, U. Eco (1981).)
Barthes had initially gone some way along that route - it seemed a natural follow-on from "Death of an Author". But he moved on to a consideration of reading and writing in which they are conceived of as being defined together. It was as part of this attempt that saw the emergence of the notion of text; a notion which emphasises the non-static, constantly signifying, astructural nature of the 'literary object'. In this way a 'text' allows itself to be 're-written' in the act of reading; the two constitute a coterminous activity and production.

Readerly texts (works) are of the type that I have been discussing. They are represented by the traditional, classic realist texts of the nineteenth, early twentieth centuries. But it was primarily a realisation that much of the new wave of modern literature did not conform to the pattern of a move toward closure and the provision of a

unitary reaffirming and fixed meaning, that led to a reflection on the nature of reading-writing distinctions.

Scriptible texts are heretical. They do not point to a truth or reality beyond the text. The meaning is not taken as pre-figured extra-textually in an author's consciousness. Its linguistic signs are not characterised by a relation between signifiers and signifieds that is said to be automatic and natural. The signifiers are allowed free-play; they declare their polyphonous nature. The signifiers suspend their attachment to a signified, or permit of an attachment to several different signifieds. There is a further play among the discourses represented in the text; there is no hierarchy of discourses in which one has ultimate primacy over the others and upon which the others converge or are subservient. The meaning or message is not said to be transported from the author to the reader across the text. The meaning remains to be constructed by and in the act of reading. Readers then are active producers, rather than passive consumers. In this regard at least, there is some shared ground with the 'constructivist' sociologies where meaning is said to be an active construction between the parties to an interaction and not simply transmitted from one individual to another in a passive fashion, (see for instance Berger and Luckman (1967) and B. Holzner (1968) and many of the Symbolic Interactionist texts). The text ensures that the reader remains aware of the continuing relationship between reading and writing. It is not here a simple exchange relationship - a giver, and a receiver - it is rather a relation of productive involvement, of co-authorship. Quite simply the reader is as much responsible for the meaning of the text as the writer. Furthermore, such texts do not assume that there is a coherence etched into itself as a reflection of some ordering of reality, prior to reading. Self-consciously scriptible texts will eschew linearity of plot and not offer a resolution of enigma. It will, rather, open up the possibilities of meaning, to the discovery and

construction of differing and challenging meanings.

It is clear that much of this is inspired from a purely literary perspective and stems from the self-consciously reflexive nature of modernist literature. It is accepted by Barthes that a totally scriptible text is an ideal extraction - but it is widely reckoned that Joyce's "Finnegan's Wake" was both a primary, and still a paragon, of the writerly text. Other texts that display the notion of text being put forward here include those of the Nouveau Roman group (see especially Robbe-Grillet's "Project for a Revolution in New York" (1972) and "Topology of a Phantom City" (1976) which both demand the sense of complete activity on the part of the reader). However, the point that Barthes and Derrida, among others, are making, and revealed most neatly in Barthes' unpacking of 'Sarrasine' (see "S/Z") is that this productivity and polyphony is not the sole prerogative of avant-garde texts, but is actually an attribute of all texts ... of language itself. It is simply that avant-garde texts are more deliberate and self-conscious and reflexive in their display of these facets of language, and that they are more assuredly interrogative.

However, there is still a political point to be made. The consumerist, passive conception of reading is so inculcated into culture, to the point of appearing as natural and right. Barthes, Derrida and Foucault would all, in their various ways, point to an ideological imperative to suppress the potentially liberating and revolutionary nature of language, and reintroduce and sustain as wholly natural and right the notions of expressive realist writing, criticism and the episteme that accompanies them. The ideological sense of positioning of the reader as consumer is perhaps the most immediately obvious manifestation of this. These points of ideology and the entrance of discourse into the struggle for power will come increasingly to the fore.

The Tridy Text

I began by declaring that I would fail to present the meaning(s) of participation to the reader; at least in any structured and coherent form. Some of the reasons for that failure may, in view of what has just been discussed, now be apparent. A consideration of the discourse on participation at Tridy as text would demand such a result. It does not imply a totally nihilistic stance. Nor is it some miserable disclaimer to excuse the failure to deliver. There is a shift of interest from the substantive content of the discourse, from a claimed re-presenting of the meaning and significance of the contents of that discourse, to an exploration of the process of 'signifiance', to the signifying work taking place in that discourse. There is a useful interest in the how of meaning; in the activity and productivity of text and the processes by which meaning is constructed; in text as production and not as product. There are not meanings produced at Tridy that remain constant and coherent such that they can be represented here in their fullness and totality. The text of participation is a process; meanings remain emergent, deferred and dispersed.

Participation can only be said to exist in the discourse at Tridy; in the socio-linguistic context of Tridy. Participation is created there in that discourse - it is only there that its meanings can and do reside. There is no structure or bureaucratic manifestation at Tridy that can sensibly be indicated and be said to adequately represent participation - or if there are, then only in so far as that structure or that piece of bureaucracy are conceived of themselves as discursive constructs. Participation exists in the discourse, not in any stable, objective, structure or thing. The

text of participation is non-static - it consists of a shifting arrangement of signifiers loosely networked around the item of 'participation' itself. This 'seamless web' of relations is in a constant state of flux, ever shifting and changing. Certain relations are foregrounded whilst others fall away or remain in potentiality. There are times of relative cohesion when a particular series of relations feature strongly and with regularity, there are other times when there is very little cohesion and the meanings are dispersed.

As 'text', then, participation and its meaning(s) are not entirely demonstrable, it cannot be laid clearly before the reader. Indeed there is a sense in which the reader will best discover the sense of participation in his/her own confrontation of the story as it is presented here. The reading of this text will assuredly be a productive activity in which the reader interacts with the text and discovers and creates fresh possibilities of meaning. As (social) critic it is not my place to attempt to foreclose on that process. The text of participation (and my presentation of it here as a text in its own right) could be said to offer a discursive ground in which the possibilities of meaning can exist. The full potential of those meanings will never be fully delivered up at one point in time or to one critical reading (neither mine, yours, nor that of the participants involved at Pencham). The reader needs to engage the text here as actively as possible to indulge in his/her own critical practice and explore the possibilities of meaning in the text. There is both a practical and in principle limit to the degree of clarity and quantity of meaning that I am able to deliver to the reader. Just as the original speakers and writers of the discourse on participation at Tridy are not at liberty to exert dictatorial control over the emerging meanings as they enter the public domain and participate in the

textual, so I, as author here, cannot restrain the possible meanings in this text.

I have, and will attempt further, to display some of the relations of participation and try to reveal the 'play' of signifiers, the textuality of the participation text, to reveal the tropological nature of the discourse, to, as Derrida suggests, reveal what is invisible in the text - but there will always remain something left over, unfinished. The emergence of meaning entails that a critical practice will always be partial. The proliferation, the potential inexhaustability of meaning always implies that, in principle, the disclosure of meanings will be incomplete. There is also the sense that meanings, and their potential is bound to the positions of intelligibility available to the 'reader'. Such positions of intelligibility are further bound to specific discourses. Thus each of us is locked into varying, but a finite, range of discourses that are enabling of these positions and the consequent possibilities of meaning. The meanings of participation available to me, to you and to those involved directly, will depend upon, and be limited by the range of discourses that we are able to bring into relation to the participation text. The ties of substantive discourses can be partially avoided by operating, as I hope we are, from the perspective of a discourse on discourse - whilst avoiding making that a metalanguage necessarily. Furthermore, whatever my text is able to achieve is itself defeasible. Because of the nature of textuality; any critical activity of mine is itself available to further critical activity, and doubtless will be. Not in the sense of evaluation, but in the sense of a secondary deconstruction to discover the linguistic grounds for the productivity and textuality of the original critical text - and so on in infinite series.

The meanings of participation are in process; text is a process (critical activity is a process?). In the context of Tridy, participation exhibited emergence. Its sense was never fixed in some prior form, nor did it attain such fixity. The meanings were constantly shifting, developing and changing in the course of the interactional activity of those taking part, in the course of the creation of the textures of meaning surrounding participation. I would like to retain that sense of emergence and process. But there is an ever present difficulty in presenting process in graphic form. Even as 'story' there is the likelihood of entering the domain of traditional critical practice where things are reducible, hermeneutically, to theme and plot, to a certain linearity (or circularity); or psychologistically to intentionality, biography and personality; or historically to sequence and cause and effect. It is precisely for these realms of reductionism that the concept of text becomes urgent.

If we accept Barthes' dictum that a text is a 'methodological field' with all that implies for the notion of constant activity of text, for production and transformation, then we are committed to the inevitable incompleteness of the text. The meanings of participation are never, in principle, complete. There always exists the possibility of change and of re-discovery, and the creation of fresh meaning. The arrangement of signifiers that give a sense of meaning to participation can only be halted by an artificial, and authoritarian movement to close off the 'play' of the signifiers. Such a closure is to a degree inevitable in my own critical practice, if only because of the finitude of my own discursive possibilities (and because my own writing does not possess the quality of innocence). Such a movement is also to be found in the practices of those involved at Tridy for the same reasons, but also more obviously and deliberately because

of the entanglement of the discourse on participation in the political process. There will be ideological, and more overtly political and organisational attempts to foreclose on the possibilities of meaning around participation. But such efforts struggle against the nature of text. The setting into motion of the ceaseless chain of signifiers and the commencement of signifying work immediately creates a site of productivity where meanings can proliferate. Those relations of signifiers are not halted, and are always incomplete; meaning is forever deferred - always partly in a state of becoming.

If meaning is in process, if 'participation' is in process - there is a severe difficulty in propounding a sense of structure. An imposed structure (for that is what it must be) does violence to the textual by fostering a sense of fixity and closure. Such closure might be the province of pragmatic and political action, but it should not be a part of a rigorous critical practice. We are returned to an emphasis on the parole end of the Saussurean dichotomy. We are interested in language-in-use, in the realisation of meaning potentials, and not in some meta-language of structure, or idealist conceptions of prescriptive rules of competence. One is concerned with the possibilities of meaning released by their actualisation in use. It is a critical practice that avoids imposing a coherence and fixity that is not there in practice. But more than that, it is a practice that hopes to display the productivity of the text and the tension created by the pragmatic attempts of interested parties to close off meaning and to impose everyday structures. I would assert that the tension at the heart of <u>this</u> text, presented here, is exactly mirrored by the tensions and contexts of meaning at Tridy. It is a tension created by actual attempts to control

meaning and its (at least partial) failure due to the inevitable textuality of the language - by the necessarily overflowing and proliferation of meaning. And it is not a purely theoretical productivity. It is the fact that meanings become uncontrollable, by individuals or groups, in relation to others, that makes alternative possibilities available. Thus at least some of the tensions at Tridy are the result of the release and dispersal of meanings, stemming from the initiation of a discourse on participation by management, and the realisation by the workforce that they are free to discover their own meanings in the text.

Part of the task, then, is to show the complexity of viewpoints and meanings in relation to participation at Tridy. Not an attempt to distil one meaning that declares that 'this is participation', certainly not in any universal sense, and not even in relation to the specific context, rather an effort to display the multiplicity of meanings apparent. In another sense, the task may be characterised as a move to positively explore the natural ambiguities and polysemic meanings around the term. But such a, largely descriptive, process is insufficient and unrewarding. The implications of textuality; the practical and political mechanisms that attempt to cope with it, and the struggles to control meaning and to liberate it are of central concern. This is best done in conjunction with a consideration of the discourse as text, by considering participation in its full textuality. How, as text, it operates as a site of active productivity that offers an array of possibilities that become both the ground and the means for the contest of meaning.

The meaning of participation does not exist in a form that precedes its entry into the textual. It exists neither as some structural form apparent in the potential of some blueprint plan (or

if it does, it does so as only one of numerous potential semiotic constructions). Nor does it exist, preceded in the minds or intentions of individuals involved in (or even extraneous to) the situation. Rather the meaning of participation is locatable in the relations of difference that exist among the signifiers that build up around the term 'participation' and in the discourse that speaks of 'participation' either directly or tangently. It exists in the routine discourse made up of the daily interactions of members.

The text of participation could be characterised as the actualisation of a series of meaning potentials through the selection of options from a networked system of linguistic levels (but primary focus at the semantic level). At each point in the development of the discourse around participation there exists options. The selection of options in those contexts is that which provides the basis for meaning. But fundamentally, not only on the basis of what is selected, but also on the basis of what is not selected; the absent is as much determining of meaning as the present. Participation exists firstly as a syntagm of present relations. The meaning of participation is apparent in the relations of signifiers present synchronically at each moment.

Thus in the early stages among some of the shop-floor there evolved relations of 'participation' as an item in the syntagm to other items that gave textures of meaning that I referred to as 'everyday' and 'technical' meanings of participation. 'Participation' appeared in syntagmatic relation to a range of other signifiers such as '(sharing of) information'; '(improving) communication'; 'consultation' and so on. In other areas it formed a relation with a texture of signifiers around the item 'meetings', thus: 'veto', 'committee', 'elections', 'minutes', 'representation', 'chairman', etc. The meaning of participation (at that time, and in the context in which those

terms were used) is derived, at least in part, from those relations in the syntagm. There is, of course, a complexity of arrangement where the various textures themselves interrelate such that, for instance, some of the relations around 'meetings' are in association with the relation between participation and 'a proper airing of views' and 'having one's voice heard'.

There is a further complexity when one considers the likely/possible connotations relating to each item-in-use that are not articulated. But then that connotational force is part of the (nearly) limitless play of the signifiers. Some of that is revealed diachronically as items, such as 'consultation', come to form and reform into fresh relations that alter its meaning, and its meaning in relation to participation as the discourse develops. A good example is provided by the early relation of 'participation-action'. A number of the shop-floor (although a minority) made reference to that relation in preliminary discussions. At that time it indexed a conception of the need for issues raised by the shop-floor to be acted upon (and not 'squashed' as was the common conception of the existing state of affairs). However, it became apparent that action was conceived of in terms of the issue being presented to management (preferably at a relatively high level) and them initiating action. The responsibility for action was given over, by the workforce, to management. (This itself indexing a further aspect of early shop-floor discourse in which the rights, obligations and responsibilities of management were conceived of in traditional, even conservative ways, such that the shop-floor expected and obligated management to take control over issues and to act upon them - 'that is what they were there for; that is what they are paid to do'.) As the scheme and the discourse around participation developed, the relation 'participation-action'

became associated with a different arrangement of relations. It came into contact with the developed notion of group solidarity and the perception by the representatives of the shop-floor that they must take responsibility for action themselves, or at least in meaningful partnership with management. It linked-in with the developed relation that participation was concerned with a mutual resolution of problems for the benefit of all. One might simplify the relations thus as a shift from 'participation - action - unilateralism', to 'participation - action - mutuality'.

One could begin to build up a supposed network of relationships in this manner hoping to map out the system of meaningful relationships arranged around participation. But quite apart from the enormous and debilitating complexity that one would encounter, such a schematisation would provide an imposed structure that isn't there in the phenomena and which would halt and detract from the processual and emergent qualities of the significance of the text. Although it might be of some analytic value in some instances as a 'snap-shot' of a possible configuration at a point in time and in relation to a particular context.

A further consideration is that such relations are not attributable to specific individuals. Each enters the public discourse and features in the text of participation freed from the constraints of intending individuals. To scrupulously delineate each participant's particular set of relations would tell us little about the overall nature of the discourse. It would further denature the interactive and constructive process of meaning. Each contribution is released into the sociality of the situation and also releases the meaning potential in that relation. The possibilities of meaning become available in the public domain by their entry into the discourse and by their textual nature. The meanings are not fixed in

those relations at the point of utterance. Their utterance is an issuance in which the possibilities of meaning - of change, and transformation, of new relations - begins, and not where it ends. The source of meaning is not located in the intending consciousness of utterer but in the relations of difference of those spoken items and others entering the discourse at that point, in that situation; and elsewhere and at other times. To continue to ask what a person meant when a particular utterance was made is a tiresome and ultimately reductivist task. Garfinkel (1967) has repeatedly pointed to the problem of the indefinite elaboration of accounts, and Cicourel (1967) has often made reference to the problem of indefinite triangulation. At that level the meaning is in the use. It is not located prior to occasions of its use, either in the mind of the individual or in some prefigured structural prescription of the meaning of words or upon grammatical or situational rules of legitimate use.

But I have been diverted from my course. I have not yet made clear the contribution of the paradigmatic relations to the determination of meaning. It is quite clear that any single item from the lexicon derives a significant portion of its meaning from other items in the lexicon, and not only from those items that are present in the syntagm synchronically. The meaning of present items can be considered as a meaning potential against a background of paradigmatic possibilities. The presence of an item has significance in relation to other items that were not said, but could have been. In the context of the preliminary meanings of the shop-floor then, each item present can be considered in relation to what could have been there instead but was not. In very general terms the item 'good' is drastically diminished without the possibility of presence of the item 'bad' in its place. More subtlely, the occurence of 'good' in the

syntagm has meaning in relation to other items that could sensibly take its place, such as 'pleasant', 'average', etc. In this way what is not present in the participation discourse tells us as much about the meaning of those items that are present in the syntagm as those items and their relationships themselves. Again in very general terms, the item 'participation' has a meaning potential only in relation to those paradigmatic relations that provide options of selection. The existence in the lexicon of items such as 'totalitarianism', 'autocracy', 'unilateralism' and so on creates the necessary meaning potential that forms the paradigmatic environment for the occasions of the use of 'participation'. There are of course relatively clear lexico-grammatical, syntactical, phonological constraints on the sensible nature of that paradigmatic environment. But there are also constraints of etiquette and convention that would appear to put limits on the feasibility of the range of items that might stand in the paradigmatic environment. There is also a sense in which the paradigmatic environment is itself a contextual construct, related to the context of the situation in which the syntagm is being acted out. The contextual determination of the situation of the utterance will at least partially determine the feasibility of the elements in the paradigmatic relations. One crude example might help. A context that leads to the definition of the situation as one of an Anglican church with a ceremony of marriage formally in progress would tend to limit the paradigmatic relations to the tiem 'God' in the utterance "in the sight of God". The context of the situation would at least create a high degree of probability that the item would not be even conceivably replaceable by the item "Allah", or "Satan" or "Zebedee". Whilst we can recognise that these items would be likely paradigmatic possibles in other contexts (or at least two of them!), in this context they cannot really be considered as relevant or sig-

nificant members of the paradigmatic environment of the item "God". However, I believe it is important to consider the context of the situation itself as a semiological construction. The context of the situation is more than minimally created by the nature of the discourse developing within it. The items in the syntagm and their relations help to define the context of the situation which, in turn, has a determining effect on the possibilities of the relevant and sensible components of the paradigmatic environment (which contributes to the meaning of the item in the syntagm.) Thus the context of the situation is at least partially a discursive construct too. However, not all the signs present in the situation will be linguistic. There will be signs that exist in other forms. There might be emblematic signs, signs embodied in pictures, architecture, style of dress and so on. In the case of the Anglican Church ceremony the robes of the priest, the architecture of the building, the iconography of the stained-glassed windows, the sign of the cross and a plethora of other signs, contribute to the total semiotic structure of the situation and defines the context of the situation. A full-blown semiological practice might want to take note of those other sign-systems. I shall pay attention myself to some of them in the context of Tridy a little later.

As these relations with participation enter the discourse,some are situationally produced and only remain in the discourse very briefly, others more fully enter the discourse in the sense that they are used in other contexts of the situation and by other people. There is a relative cohesion in such longevity. However, it is a spurious cohesion for the entry of the relation into the discourse invariably entails that it becomes dispersed in the text. It immediately becomes ensnared in a new and ever shifting fabric of other relations. Thus

the relation 'participation-power' generated in the discourse of the shop-floor in the early meetings has, initially a relatively discrete set of syntagmatic relations and works off a constrained arrangement of paradigmatic relations. Thus initially it was associated with committee ratios of shop-floor representatives to management representatives and the progression of unresolved issues out of the matrix of the department. It belonged almost exclusively in that texture of meanings around the notion of meetings. However, as the discourse developed, the item 'power' (or like terms) became engaged in numerous other relations that added to the complexity of its meaning potential. It became related to textures around the legitimacy and warrant of supervisory power, it became involved in the set of relations generally about the issue of decision-making and so on. Its meaning potential magnified and proliferated to a degree. Other items held an initially strong potential in this way, but then faded, dropping out of the discourse or being made to confine to a restricted or habituated set of relations. The paradox is that the fleeting relations often had more coherence and unity than those items that had a prolonged life, entered the discourse more fully and thus came to participate in the textual and to display textuality.

A text has no beginning and no end - this is a feature of its inevitable indeterminancy. Thus at Tridy, although rigorous investigations could pinpoint the first time that the word 'participation' was employed (in other than a purely 'casual' way) that would not do as a starting point for the text. That would be to suggest that there was a definitive origin for the text, something that we are trying to avoid. It would be to assume that the entrance of the discourse of participation was the result of an invention of the grounds of that discourse by some determinate force. It would ignore the intertextuality of all texts. And it is clear that even the talk of the consul-

tants and the senior managers who could be said to have presented the discourse to the company, there are already 'resayings' - a tapping of an already developed intertext. And indeed explicit reference is made to that by both the consultants and the managers. The personnel manager makes direct reference to the debate in academic, business, political and journalistic circles. The text then, slips off into the intertext and the origin and beginning is lost.

In addition the introduction of participation immediately involves it in a discourse that is already apparent and on-going. There is no new and independent discourse on participation by which it derives its meaning. It enters existing discourses, and it is in its relations within those discourses that it achieves meaning. Those discourses have no identifiable beginning since they emerge from and are interlinked with a range of other extant or extinct discourses. The meanings of participation among the shop-floor in the early stages are still and immediately locked almost entirely within the habitual discourse that marks the shop-floor language. This discourse is at least partially represented by that array of shop-floor talk and reaction that I presented in the first section that describes the events at Tridy. Thus the majority of meanings that seem to emerge at that stage are mostly negatively related to that existing discourse. More directly, the majority of the meanings are related to the shop-floors existing discourse that presents current work practices and relations in a negative fashion. For instance, the relation 'participation-extended contribution of the shop-floor' is negatively linked to that feature of existing shop-floor discourse in which they talk of the demeaning of the workers by a waste of their talent, and by a failure to consider their views as worthy of consideration. Participation is defined in terms of a possible or desired means of rectifying that unwanted and despised state of affairs. It should be

noted that there is an accompanying rhetoric here that suggests that the company and the managers could actually benefit from a more appropriate use of the skills of the workforce and a more attentive listening to their views. Most relations are linked back into existing company discourse in this way. There is not, for the moment at least, an independent or developed participation discourse that refers to itself.

In other situations such a feature is used to rhetorical advantage. In the presentation of participation, management are careful in places to align the burgeoning discourse around participation with a more familiar and shared company discourse. The relations of participation are made to appear natural by being embedded in a domain of discursive familiarity. The threat of participation, its strangeness, is disarmed and made comfortable and acceptable.

Despite the remarks made a little earlier about the dialectic between the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic, there remains an element of speculation as to the content of the paradigmatic environment. Any analysis from a negativity, from an absence, is fraught with difficulties. Despite the grounding provided by the semiological features of the context of the situation and by the syntagm, access to the paradigmatic continues to be problematic. There is a sense in which the items in a syntagm under consideration at a particular point in time is an index of items appearing diachronically at previous points in time. It might be said that those prior items appearing in the discourse are in paradigmatic relation to those appearing in the current syntagm. Thus at point A, a relation between 'participation' and 'communication' may appear; whilst at point B, a relation between 'participation' and 'consultation' is present. The meaning of the relation at point B could be said to be given further value by the

replacement of 'communication' by 'consultation'. The value of 'consultation' is added to by the fact that in that context 'communication' could have been used but was not. A good example of this type of relation is provided by the series of terms by which the scheme at Tridy was referred to at different points in time by senior management. Thus at different stages and in different contexts of situation there appears, 'participation (scheme) as 'project'', 'participation as 'experiment'', 'participation as 'trial'', 'participation as 'exercise'' and so on. The meaning potential of each item is in part derived from the sense of options and a realisation that alternatives have appeared previously. The selection of the different options can be seen in terms of their rhetorical function, some features of which I have already unpacked.

The text of 'participation' can be thought of in terms of the passage through the selection of options. They are not options that become stable, fixed and complete; they give rise to a chain of signifiers that are in a continual process of addition combination and displacement. The possibilities of meaning of each item remain free. Participation consists of that text in which relations such as 'participation-communication', 'communication-influence', 'meetings-power' and so on, build up and become a shifting fabric of signifying activity. This fabric of present relations with their paradigmatic relations and full connotational force, offer a site of productivity in which the contests for the control of meaning at Tridy are enacted. The very textuality creates the potentialities that allow for the possibility of alternative definitions and the seeds of negotiation and challenge. Under the pressure of controlling activities of interested parties, some series of relations do appear to form themselves into a relatively discrete and cohesive 'texture' from time to time and in certain contexts of use. The relations around 'parti-

cipation - representational democracy', involving a type of sub-text of 'meetings' and associated terms, is an example of an area of relative cohesion. The rhetoric and ideological underpinning of that central relation is supportive of the structuration of the scheme. It allows the discourse to develop in terms of programmed meetings, elections and representative committees on a departmental basis and so on. It ultimately allows the managing director to employ the rhetoric that allows participation to be discursively structured in ways that perfectly map the supposed existing hierarchical structure of the company.

At other points the relations are more diffuse and short-lived. The potentialities created by the establishment of particular relations are never realised. For instance, some members of the shop-floor with a limited awareness of the 'technical' meanings of participation brought relations between 'participation' and, say, "the Whitley Committees of the post office", or between 'participation' and 'shop-floor representation on the Executive Board of the company'. Such relations, whilst containing tremendous potentiality for the meaning of participation in the context of Tridy, only briefly entered the discourse and did not create strong relations with others in the syntagm. Their position in relation to the ongoing discourse was fairly weak and they were not cohesively drawn into the discourse. Most simply entered in a particular context of situation, used for particular purposes, but then withered away and existed only as a marginal 'trace' in the text of participation.

Let us be clear then. Beginning from a conception of the inevitable productivity of language I would assert that the developing discourse about participation at Tridy exhibits a textuality. The meanings of participation circulate within that text, and only there.

The task is, at least in part, to reveal that textuality, to explore its own mode of production in which the meanings of participation are locatable in the seamless web of relations of signifiers. Reference is to participation as a site of productivity that allows, and is the ground for, the contests of meaning and control at Tridy. The meaning of participation is not held to be discoverable by reference to something outside or beyond the discourse on participation, like some sort of objective structure or master plan. We begin with the words and move towards the meanings - we do not pressume that the meaning is there, obviously or secretly, in some prefigured and coherent form, and then search for words that are said to express that/those meaning(s). The meanings of participation exists exactly and only in those relations of signifiers that circulate in a ceaseless and fluctuating fabric loosely around the item 'participation'.

'Participation' does not operate as a centre of the text, merely as an aligning and recurring point of reference. The text of participation is characterised by this free-play of signifiers without any necessary reference to a fixed and stable set of signifieds. The meanings of participation are found in the relations of signifiers such as 'consultation', 'communication', 'meetings', 'representation' and so on, that shift and vibrate in a ceaseless activity as the discourse goes on. The meaning(s) of communication, say, are located in its own dynamic syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations and not by reference to objective and stable signifieds. The meaning of 'communication' is not displayed by reference to objective objects such as company minutes or memos., or any supposed structure of formal channels of communication between company levels. The relations of difference that constitute the meanings of participation circulate in the 'methodological field' of the text. The text is the site of the

perpetual activity of the signifiers and their shifting relations - 'communication - consultation - power - veto / power - unilateralism - mutuality - action' and so on. The meaning is not fixed or fixable, it is not coherent, whole, complete or totally present. It is in a state of flux; it is in process, emergent, becoming, deferred; a constant activity of productive and dynamic potentiality. The text of participation should be viewed as a production and not as a displayable product. Not as an arid means of signification but the site of signifying work - of 'signifiance'. The meanings of participation are not transmitted pure and whole from intending individuals to passive receivers but circulate in the discourse, created and recreated in a constant activity of production. A discourse that is verbally enacted in the daily interactions of those participants. It is here that the view of language and meaning shares much in common with those 'constructivist' sociological paradigms such as the symbolic interactionists, the absurdists, and, of course, the ethnomethodologists.

The meanings of participation are dispersed across the discourse and immersed in the text. The text of participation is at least a polysemous space where the paths of numerous possible meanings intersect and mingle. Such dispersal entails that the meanings are hard to retrieve and re-present - indeed an act of retrieval and static representation is in danger of doing harm to the nature of the text. It is not only the complexity of the relations and their possibilities, it is not only the continuing mobility of the signifiers that makes the task difficult, it is also a matter of the endless deferment of meaning. The very play of the signifiers and the inevitable incompletion of the syntagm at any point in time entails that the full possibilities of meaning are never there, present and full. The deferment ensures that any critical or deconstructive

practice displays an inevitable partiality. The text of participation is (as already suggested) likened to a 'seamless web' of referals and differential 'traces' that echo and reverberate in the discourse in an infinite array of permutations, subtle variations, and barely audible whispers. Even the final creation of a lauded 'site-wide' scheme with elaborate arrangements said to be graphically represented in the heroic organisational pyramids of the managing director, does not foreclose on the activity of the signifying field. Even at that point one could not describe the meaning of participation by reference to that monolithic, bureaucratic edifice. An organisational chart depicting the arrangement of departments and their representational structures and indicating the frequency of meetings together with copies of minutes and agendas would not stand as a closing signified of what participation means at Tridy.

The text of participation, characterised by this activity of the signifier, should not be thought of as a growing process moving toward a final and resolving point. Participation is not finally discovered at some discrete point in time. Participation is not finally there when the site-wide scheme is made manifest. The movement of signifiers is not a linear one towards this finishing. There is no resolution, no final revelation and convergence of meaning at a point of maturity. Nor is there a sense in which the movement of the signifiers is one that brings necessarily a sophistication or an enrichment. The textual activity does not necessarily move towards a greater profundity. There is no sense of the text moving towards a more significant and highly developed meaning of participation. It simply moves. One would not excavate the layers of text and reveal an increasingly civilised construction of meaning as one went 'deeper'. There is not, then, a hermeneutic delving for the true heart of the

text. There is not a promise of the delivery of a revelatory understanding of what the text 'really' means. There are no really neat thematics that tread on towards a meaningful core that gives up the secret of the text. One cannot capture those themes and show how they relate to, and lead one to, the core. Participation is not developing toward some teleological point of completeness. Rather there is pure activity, ceaseless and unending. Text is the site of the activity, and, as has been made clear, it has no origin, centre or end. It is a movement of shifting relations and not necessarily of positive cumulations and deliberate and satisfying building. There is no coherence provided by the supposed ordering of an end in sight. There are dyings and withering aways. There are births, rebirths and abortions. There are omissions and contradictions. There are small movements of a deranged nature constructed for particular contextual contingencies that would not fit comfortably into a presumed overall grand design. There are movements that dislocate other relations; that draw in; that cast out. There are movements in which the relations of signifiers shift into new positions that are variations or even counter-points to previous arrangements.

There is a concern then to show the textuality of participation, to reveal the polysemic nature of the meanings of participation and their dispersal through the discourse; to show how that textuality is both the site of and the means by which there is an active productivity that offers the liberty of the language, but also the means of control, of exclusion and inclusion. There is a concern with the process of meaning, the how of meaning. Interest would focus then on the accomplishment of meaning, on the relation of text to rhetoric and the tropological features of the text. Why do certain meanings arise and not others? What processes are involved in the presentation, the

control, the maintenance and the contests of meaning? How do certain meanings attain a certain ascendency and become socially accredited? In particular, it is suggested that the very textuality of participation - its proliferation of meaning (at least in potential), its metaphorical and ideological nature, its free-play of signifiers, is likely to undo the espoused project and will reveal the pragmatic and rhetorical attempts to provide closure on meaning in particular ways.

The text of participation exists in the ongoing discourse of involved members - its meanings, then, escape the bounds of those particular individuals who make pronouncements upon it. The text is not located in individual consciousnesses, nor are the meanings of the text. A tracking down of the meanings of the text would not be greatly aided by reference to individuals biography, personality or other reductivist moves. This is particularly pungent in the light of the post-structuralists conception of the subject as a discursive construct also (there will be further comment on this later). The practice here evades the inclusion of intentionality in the analysis of meaning. Even if we just accept the Wittgensteinian conception of meaning as use, then we already move beyond a necessary consideration of intentions. For the post-structuralists the reversion to intentionality returns us to those transcendent, idealist conceptions of language and meaning. It ultimately relies on the logocentric tradition that places the subject at the centre. It relies, too, upon what Derrida castigates as the crippling metaphysical notion of presence developed most fully perhaps in Husserl. The individual subject is placed in the central position as the originator, owner, determinant and guarantee of meaning. Meaning is there-

by taken as existing in the mind of the individual prior to its manifestation in spoken or written form. It is then placed indelibly in the text by the author, total, complete and fixed, to be given up to the reader in the exact form (more or less) in which it was originally incarcerated. I want to deny that the individuals at Tridy can act as authors in this way; that they can 'write' the work, act as its owner, and final and absolute authority for the meaning of the 'work'. They, as individuals or even as a grouping of subjectivities, are not responsible for placing a unitary, stable and immutable meaning on participation.

The meanings are not given off; there is not a direct communication of a complete 'message' transmitted from a source via a particular medium to a receiver who passively receives the message in a pure and unadulterated form. It is not even a matter of encoding and decoding, although that immediately complicates the situation. Rather the meanings are released. They become public property at the very least, available for transformation and modification. They are released as a potentiality and retain that potentiality. The interactionist perspective has already done much to highlight the constructive mode of meaning in the dynamics of interpersonal interaction. For them, too, meaning is a totally emergent phenomenon derived from the constructive work of parties to the interaction. It is partly the textual quality of language that ensures that such a constructive attitude is necessary.

The sytagm is itself constructed in relation to the context of the situation, which includes the position of the interactants (those positions also being part of the function of the text - that is the text itself creates the positionality of the interactants, especially their positions of intelligibility in relation to the

text - more of this later). The relations of the signifiers is, then, not linearly and obviously presented from one party to another but becomes a series of options selected. And clearly the potentiality of the paradigmatic relations are not in the control of an intending speaker. Thus, although the managing director might make a stark presentation that avows that 'participation means greater involvement', he has no natural right to assume that what he intends by that is fixed in its presentation and will be received as such by his audience. Its meaning is firstly locked in with the other pronouncements on participation that are in the various discourses at Tridy. It has meaning in relation to those others. It also attains meaning by the paradigmatic possibilities that are set up by its recognition as a selection from a number of options.

But, of course, the managing director, for example, is aware of that fact. He is no more prepared to take the risk of assuming that one simple communicative act is sufficient for him to have his definition of the situation immediately accepted and accredited. He realises the need to say more, and indeed does say a lot more. He develops a series of, as he hopes, interconnected relations that map out for him the linguistic and practical parameters of participation in relation to the Tridy context. He employs a rhetorical and tropological language that seeks to make the relations presented appear as the natural and correct ones and that effectively shuts out the possibility of the development of alternative and challenging relations. Part of the problem for him is that the more that is said, the more that is released, then the relations of the signifiers becomes more and more complex. The signifiers are set free and begin their potentially mischievous play. New possibilities become available and fresh relationships become feasible. The control over the text becomes increasingly problematic.

However, there is a tension created between this conception of the material textuality of language, and the operation of common-sense and other ideologically based theories of language and communication, and by the entrance of the discourse on participation into the pragmatic struggle for power in the company. There <u>are</u> efforts to control meaning, and there are features of the discourse that operate to provide structure, order and closure. There is an attempt by the participants to present themselves as authors in the traditional sense. They are the authors of the 'work'; its owner, and the authority for the meaning taken to be transmitted. In another sense, too, they are operating as traditional critics. With the scheme and the discourse under way, they present themselves as the disclosers of the meanings in the text. Certain figures, or interest groups, present themselves as authors and/or critics; as the interpreters of the text in relation to participation. The turns of the discourse, its direction, its outcomes, and ultimately its meanings are assumed to be the province of these figures.

Managers (or certain managers of the directing elite) are presented and seen as authors and fathers. They are already institutionally and attributionally figures of authority in relation to routine existing company discourse. They are positioned as authority figures in relation to the meanings of normal company discourse at a certain level. They very assumption and attribution of the title 'manager' serves to create a particular position, for occupants of that linguistic space, within the routine discourse of the company. It also creates, reciprocally, a certain position for those other organisational members that have no legitimised claim to the term. As authors and owners (and the extended sense of ownership in the formal sense of the ownership of the company, of the means of pro-

duction attributed to such occupants, is not without a certain accompanying force here) they accrue the rights and obligations that are conventionally deemed appropriate. They are the authors and owners of the significant company discourse. Matters of meaning in relation to that discourse are taken as referable to them for arbitration and the delivery of the true and right meaning. They are taken as the source and the warrant in relation to the meanings of company discourse. This is concretised, for instance, in the way in which disputations or uncertainties in the discourse about questions of company policy and executive functioning are referred directly to those occupants for a ruling and a serving up of the correct meaning and interpretation. All disputations of meaning (at a certain level it should be stressed) are referable to those who are assumed to have a privileged position of intelligibility in relation to the discourse. These positions are discursively created in the discourse in numerable ways by such relations of difference as 'manager - worker', 'superior - subordinate', 'expert - novice', 'leader - follower' and by a host of other relations that occur in the discourse (and by a range of other non-linguistic semiotic signs. Think of the relation of 'blue suit - overall', and the signifiers of place provided by the paraphenalia of a manager's office compared with the communal working environment of the shop-floor personnel, and so on.).

This positioning in the discourse of 'managers' creates at the same time a position for non-managers. They are positioned as not in a privileged position in relation to the general company discourse. They are positioned as passive recipients of the meanings and interpretation provided by the managers (as authors and owners). Rather like the readers of classic realist texts they adopt a position of passivity in relation to the text and the meanings of the text.

They are receivers of the message or at the most questioners about the meaning of the text. They are not held to have access to the meaning of the text independently of the auspices of the author (manager). They do not occupy a privileged position of intelligibility in the discourse. The meaning of the discourse for them is provided by the managers as they have invested it in the text. Any difficulty in readily accessing that message is only resolvable by reference back to the manager and his intentions or interpretation in the light of this 'misunderstanding'. The shop-floor, so position, are placed such that they respect the filial rights of the managers-as-authors. As author owner and authority for the company discourse, the manager demands and gets respect, he is given rights and obligations in relation to the determination of the meaning of the discourse.

In the same manner in which Foucault talks of the 'author-function' as a process that marks off an area of discourse, then so can we consider 'manager' in a similar fashion. The creation of, and the positioning of 'manager', within a discourse, or within a range of discourses, marks off that discourse and that position in particular ways. The entrance of 'manager' (either explicitly or implicitly) in the discourse serves to characterise a certain 'mode of being of discourse', distinguishing it from other possible modes of being. It forces a delineation that implies that what is said must be 'read' in particular mode, and that, 'in a given culture, must receive a certain status'. The presence of 'manager' serves, not necessarily to represent the exterior subject, but to mark off the discourse in specific ways, to position it in the realm of other discourses, to provide it with a specific status, and to reveal 'its mode of being'. Part of what is thus marked off is the position of privilege in relation to the discourse, such that 'manager' delineates a privileged

position of intelligibility. 'Manager' confers a mode of author(ity) on the discourse. 'Manager' creates a position of privilege in which the true meaning and interpretation of the discourse becomes available. It attaches rights and status to the speech. It can stand as authoritative, and as guarantor of meaning. It demands respect from those other positions in the overall discourse that are marked reciprocally as 'non-manager', as 'worker' and 'subordinate'. It might be said then that 'manager' does not need to refer directly to an actual speaking subject from whom particular meanings emanate, but rather as a discursive construct and function, a socially accredited function, that marks off and classifies as it were, certain discourses in society. The radical pursuit of Foucault in this way further renders a decentreing of the subject. 'Manager' becomes not a concrete subject but a mode of functioning of the discourse, one mode amongst many; a mere dimension of discourse rather than its central point of origin and its ultimate authority. (It is clear that it is not only the term 'manager' that functions thus, there would be many others. For instance, the term 'company', often used in strange and reified ways to refer to a position on the discourse, would operate at times in similar ways.)

It should also be noted that 'manager' does not operate in the discourse in this way in isolation. Its very existence is dependent upon a whole range of other discursive arrangements (the notion of 'company' being one of them). Foucault would go further and relate these 'subject -functions' to wider aspects of society and to the part they play in the will to power engaged in via discourse. He points to the linking of the functions to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines and articulates the universe of discourses. I imagine that in this way 'manager' is

linked and supported by the notions of organisations that are apparent in our culture (the perspective allows for cultural and historical variability). Just as the author-function is linked to those institutions and systems that determine the discourses on literature; the ideological and political institutions of orthodox critical practice that are socially accredited; the publishing houses, the institutions of censorship and the guardians of official taste, etc.; so the manager function is linked to those institutions and systems of industrial and commercial organisation that create the bounds of 'company' discourses. The notion of 'manager' is only supportable within that discursive arrangement. Those institutions tend to try and exert a force on the domains of discourse, and where, in those discourses, the manager-function finds a legitimate position.

The passivity of the shop-floor in relation to matters that they considered to be beyond their sphere of concern and influence, is documented in an earlier section. The reader is reminded of those reported conversations with the shop-floor at the outset. There was then an attribution of this type of manager-function. The shop-floor on more than one occasion referred to the right, and indeed duty of the management to take responsibility for decisions and actions - in other words to control and take charge of the discourse. 'That is what they are there for, that is what they are being paid to do'. The shop-floor often clearly positioned themselves as not fully entering the discourse in which important company matters and decisions relating to them are made. They are only prepared to raise questions in relation to those matters and to put them before management. Management then is put in the position of defining or redefining the issue. They are held to be the guardians of the company discourse. It is up to them to provide the interpretations that bring meaning and sense back.

Questions of the meaning of company discourse are related back to the manager who is held as being able to relocate the meanings in the common and traditional discourse in sensible and accredited ways.

In the same manner the shop-floor in the early stages did not assume a language of ownership in relation to participation. Many of the workforce indeed denied any sense of ownership. The scheme belonged to management - to the company - it was their project, it belonged to their company discourse. The language of ownership was heavily employed by members of management. Furthermore they employed a rhetoric that explicitly tried to locate 'participation' within the normal and traditional company discourse. There was talk of it not subverting normal work relations, not as a replacement, more as a supplement. There was the more explicit linking of 'participation' with the hierarchical structures of the company. In other ways too the term 'participation' and its multiple relations were made to fit in with the existing company discourse.

Thus, at least initially, 'participation' became another part of that discourse and positioned the shop-floor in relation to it in traditional ways - something with which they readily colluded. In this way the manager was again held as being the 'author' of the participation text. He was expected to know the text of participation absolutely and fully. He was expected and positioned as being able to deliver the meaning of participation in a unified and coherent manner to the passive workforce. The shop-floor positioning themselves as passive 'readers' are forced then to respect the rights of the manager as 'author', to respect his intentions and his ability to transmit a clear and intended meaning. Managers are responsible for providing correct interpretations, for setting out the content

and the plot of the 'story' and to explain how the text proceeds. They are able, and must provide, a coherent text; like the version presented by the managing director with his pyramidal structures. (The relief of participants after that presentation is revealing of that search for an author who could clarify the text and show passive readers where the plot was taking them.) The managers become the sole arbiters for the text. They are given the right and the obligation to provide the meanings and the explanations of any transformations, modifications and distortions that are said to appear in the text. Any apparent hiccoughs in the scheme; any deviations or unanticipated outcomes in relation to the taken definition of participation, are held to be explainable by managers (as authors). The text for the passive reader should be smooth, linear, orderly and obvious. Any visible contradictions, omissions and incoherences should be repairable by reference back to the author (as manager).

In the early stages of the scheme, the representatives conformed to this passive conception. They conformed to the traditional mode of company discourse. They would not fully and actively enter the discourse. They would deliver up to management issues and questions in relation to the general company discourse and to the participation discourse only, and would cede the right to control the discourse to management. Management were given the right to define the answers to the questions in their way, in ways that conformed to and reconfirmed the company discourse. Participation itself became defined in these movements. The participation text was the text of management. The shop-floor would not, positioned as they were as passive 'readers', expect to discover fresh and new meanings of their own in the text. They were not inclined and not positioned to engage the text interrogatively. They would not expect to find alternate meanings in the text,

indeed they would not even be looking for any. They expect to find in the text only that which is put there by the 'author' (manager).

The shop-floor did not participate much in the higher levels of the company discourse. Nor did they participate in the discourse in the broader society in relation to participation, and they did not come, initially, to participate in the company discourse on participation. They did not have a developed access to those realms of discourse. They were unable to adopt interrogative positions or equal positions of intelligibility in relation to them - positions that might have enabled them to extract their own meanings, to exploit the textuality and create alternatives. They had only a restricted positionality in relation to those discourses. They were thus vulnerable to the definitions put forward from elsewhere. They have ceded the authority for the meaning of the text to management.

The search for the warrant and the source of the meanings of participation are pursued to a particular point. Or rather that is better formulated as a question. What is taken as the source of the meaning of participation? and how far back (?) would that search go? In most discourses there is a conventional and/or in principle limit to such a search. It is being suggested here that such a search, in terms of the search for an origin, is fruitless. It makes no sense to look for that warrant outside of the text in some originating source. However, it is a part of the political process in the context of Tridy that the search would proceed back to a reference point within management discourse. Often the search for that meaning would end up in the lap of management, or indirectly with the consultants-as-experts. 'Right' or 'correct' interpretations are held to be locatable with management or the consultants.

More importantly that search ends up in the body of traditional company discourse, or in the intertext of referred to discourses beyond Tridy in which the issue of participation is discussed. In this sense, one mode/realm of discourse operates as a warrant for another. The location of a supposed source provides a further means of closure on the text. Part of that closure at Tridy is achieved by the rhetorics that relate the discourse (or talk, since it is scarcely developed as an independent discourse) on participation to other areas of discursive familiarity. There is, for instance, the move to relate participation to the broad, socially valued discourse on representational democracy, there is the move to relate participation to the discourse of broad social change and a sense of historical inevitability, there is the move to relate participation more directly to the local discourse in which company matters are normally cast. In this way the location for the supposed source of the participation text is recirculated within existing and familiar discourses. That anchoring is taken as sufficient grounding for the new text. The nature of those grounding discourses and the depth seen as adequate for the purposes of recuperating participation, are revealing of some of the underlying ideology operating within the company. The extent to which that project is colluded with and accepted is also revealing of the sharedness of specific pragmatic epistemologies. As an adequate foundation, as a point beyond which the search for warrant and explanation is not seen as necessary to proceed beyond, it stands as an index of the incorrigible propositions that the company culture is based upon. Thus, for instance, the discourse on participation is rhetorically related to a quasi-scientific discourse. It might be said that a degree of scientism is taken as of adequate explanatory force within the culture of Tridy. At least a part of the underlying

epistemology of the company culture resides in an incorrigible faith in the explanatory power of scientific discourse. In other words, if an issue or problem could be shown to be covered by a quasi-scientific language, that would be taken as sufficient guarantee of the sense of the answer - there would be no further recourse to supposedly 'deeper' warrants. This links in with other identified features of company culture such as the self-conception of the company as 'progressive' (the relation 'progressive - scientific' still being a strong one) and as 'modern' and 'forward-thinking'. I have already commented that much of common company discourse is already characterised by an extensive lexicon of scientific, quasi-scientific and facsimiles of scientific terms.

Part of the dilemma and tension in the company discourse on participation is engendered by the fact that a discourse is both the means by which the struggle for the control of meaning and definition is fought, and the very ground of that struggle. The language of participation (like any unfamiliar language) is potentially dangerous. Indeed the very potentiality and inherent proliferation of meaning is itself a possible source of disruption, change, revolution and anarchy even. The language here is naturally dangerous and particularly so because of its proximity to recognisable arenas of overt political activity. All language contains the potential of liberation. But it is also the means of attaining dominance and control. If you don't release meaning(s) there is little prospect of having particular definitions accepted and accredited. However, the inevitable releasing of the free-play of signifiers means that the supposed meanings given-off are subject to potential transformation, reinterpretation and alteration; and changes in possible dangerous ways to those who are seeking to put forward a particular and constrained conception

that reinforces their position in the social formation. Here is the tension, here is the risk. Indeed part of the compulsion on the company to release the text of participation stems avowedly from their own fear that others external to the company would be able to foist a discourse and a system with discrete meanings upon them. Thus they feared that government with its institutional power to define situations would force the company to accept a prescribed form of participation.

The task of management/company discourse is to control and tame that risk. It wants to seek to stem that revolutionary potential, to confine the proliferation of meaning. It wants to present participation in ordered, reasonable and sensible ways. Ways that make it manageable and that return it to the familiar realms of discourse that habituate the company and are reflexively supportive of the dominant social formation. It has already been hinted that part of that achievement is made by locating the 'dangerous' text of participation within the discursively familiar; that is, by relating it to normal company discourse and other known and shared discourses. In such a fashion the danger and threat of participation is reduced. The talk in relation to participation becomes comfortable and familiar. The audience can readily acquiesce to the obvious truth and recognisable sense of what is being said.

The critical practice engaged in here will not succeed in displaying the meanings of participation in the context of Tridy, it will be an exercise that is at best partial. It might more fruitfully be said to display some of the processes of the production and presentation of meanings, and, perhaps more significantly, some of the efforts to control and enclose meanings. I will assert that there exists frequently, a political and ideological imperative to repress

and suppress the potentially liberating and revolutionary nature of language. It is also a necessary feature of practical language use, and a prerequisite for the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of language. That is, for language to work, to do things, it must be made finite and controlled. Garfinkel's 'etcetera clause' and other everyday linguistic and interactional practices are the mundane accomplishment of such a closing off, for practical purposes, of the indefinite elaboration of meaning. I am more concerned here with the more overtly rhetorical and ideological closure and control of keaning. In the context of Tridy there is a movement to suppress the free-play of the signifiers in the text of participation for practical bureaucratic and political purposes. There is a movement to recuperate the 'wildness' of participation to the existing discourses of the dominant social formation. There is a reversion to 'enclosed meanings', the presentation of meanings as unitary and right.

There is a supposed and presented innocence of the text. The relations developed in the company discourse around participation are put forward as 'innocent', as natural and true. Thus the relation of participation to representational democracy achieves a rapid and unquestioned acceptance because it is made to appear and achieves a state of naturalness. It is the function of rhetoric to so work on relations, to convert the arbitrary and the non-innocent to the natural and the innocent. The relation between participation and representation is not natural, it is a selection amongst options, it is an arbitrary, if ideologically derived, relation. But it is made to appear natural and obvious in the context of Tridy by a rhetoric that exploits an assumed shared ideological base. (More of this later).

The discourse on representational democracy is known and shared. What's more, it is a widely socially valued discourse. The association of the 'strange', 'participation' with this known discourse, makes it familiar and acceptable. It is made to link with other 'minor' signifiers such as 'debate', 'reasonableness', 'considering all shades of opinion', 'the right to a say', 'discussion' etc. to which the members can readily acquiesce and feel good about. These are areas of discourse that have a common social value. It also locks into that other texture of meanings around the item of 'meetings' which immediately encloses it within the common and existing discourse of and about the company. Meetings are the natural arena of everyday company discourse at the managerial level. Participation is clearly brought into the managerial domain.

There is a mythicality at work here; a mythicality that converts the arbitrary into the natural, the conventional into the universal and contradiction into coherence. The management discourse on participation aspires to represent it in the context of reality. Its relations are held to be an accurate reflection of how things are. For example attention is drawn to social and historical '<u>forces</u>' at work 'in the real world' that are held up to be determining of the inevitability of the onset of participation. The real outside world is characterised as having naturally moved to a more participative modus operandi and that if the company is to remain involved sensibly in the real world, it too must take part in that movement. The company structures, embodied graphically in the managing director's slide show, are also presented as a representation of reality. That is simply how organisations are. Participation, as part of the 'new' organisation of the company must be made to conform to that structure. And at a more banal level the personnel manager was often

at pains to point out to all and sundry just what things are actually like 'in the real world'. But what is being accomplished here is not a natural and correct presentation of reality but a recycling of the discursively familiar; an accessing of known and shared regions of discourse. A familiarity that achieves naturalness. That makes the 'newness' of participation palatable and comfortable, and that forecloses on more unsettling and challenging alternative conceptions of 'reality'.

The text of participation at Tridy could be approached in the same manner in which Barthes approached the text of Balsac's 'Sarasine'. The text of participation is presented and masquerades as a 'readerly text', as a type of classic realist text, given to the audience,(the readers-as-shop-floor members) to passively consume. There is an attempted denial of the productivity of language and the textuality, a non-recognition of its nature as discourse. There is a movement to elide alternative versions and definitions. It is a supposed straight representation of 'the way things are' that presents itself as innocent and natural. It is in fact dependent upon, and reflexively supports, an ideology. The text of ideology poses the problem for the audience, proposes the enigma in the form of the newness and strangeness of participation as it enters the discourse. It then takes the audience towards a promised point of resolution. There is the presentation of a plan (plot) that displays the development of participation and a supposed resolution when the scheme reaches a supposed state of completion with the extension of the scheme across the whole site and the inclusion of participation totally within the structures and bureaucracy of the existing company arrangements. There is the presentation of a coherent and ordered array of meanings that enfolds the

phenomena and that casts out-of-bounds alternative and challenging definitions. The meanings are padlocked-off and put forward as relatively complete and absolute - a covering of the true state of affairs.

The potential disruption of participation is openly acknowledged. It has the inevitable potential of disruption. It is a newness and a strangeness; an area of discursive unfamiliarity. The tension is created by the possibility of the uncontrollable potential of the proliferation of meaning engendered by the introduction of this newness. But then a lisable text requires that element - that is part of its stock in trade. It superficially deals with dramas of rupture and dissolution only to demonstrate the capacity of its own logic and world view to recuperate it by providing, from within itself, the means of closure and resolution. The success in taming the wildness, reflexively reaffirms the veracity and strength of the method, the epistemology and the ideology that is seen to accomplish it. Each time a problem and disruption is solved and enclosed by the methods of the dominant social formation, its status as the correct and natural perspective is confirmed. Participation is a potential drama of change and disruption - its control and inclusion within the known discourses adds power to those discourses and the methods by which they are sustained.

It seems in a sense that established domains of discourse require the testing of a potential disruption so that the closing off of that disruption reinforces the appropriateness and strength of the domain. There is probably a ritualistic quality here on occasions. It seems likely that lay epistemologies require ritualistic tests and reflexive confirmations that publicly draw attention to, and involve the cultures' members in a rite of confirmation and reaffirmation.

Public and ritualistic demonstrations of the power and correctness of the dominant epistemology. Participation as a lisable text flirts ritualistically with the unknown, with the disruption of the enigmatic - but only with the promise of re-delivery of order and the truth, and a recuperation to the known. The alien and enigmatic quality of participation is returned to, and resolved by the dominant social formation and its accompanying ideology.

Participation considered as a 'scriptible' text would draw attention to the 'unnaturalness' of the signs. It would consider the relation and the passage from signifier to signified to be not automatic and natural but dependent upon convention and metaphor; on rhetoric, ideology and familiar discursive practices. The text of participation should be treated of in ways that are akin to Barthes 'S/Z' rather than 'taken' as being like the supposed lisable text of Sarrasine. It would focus on the textuality of the text and display the reliance of the discourse on the tropological, the rhetorical and the ideological.

The espoused project of the text of participation (as lisable text) is said to be undone by the ultimate failure of the text to elide its own nature as discourse. The attempt to provide coherence, order, unitary meanings and closure is threatened always by the productivity of the language. An interrogation of the texts reveals those points in the text that are its aporia; that are the points to which the text references for its own warrant. These are the imposed limits of the text. That limit and finiteness is the point at which the text begins to turn back on itself in a circularity, or merely shifts to other discourse domains to explain itself and justify its status. Such points are crevasses in the text that disrupt its coherence and linearity; that threatens its holism and totalising;

that interrupts its smooth passage. Such points also deposit a disjunction in the aspired link to an essential origin that is said to hold the truth. Its espoused project to represent essential reality is displayed as a discursive artifice. The aporia reveals ultimately the incorrigible presuppositions that are taken as foundational and that are rooted in a particular epistemic discourse. An epistemic discourse that is hardly innocent but which operates reflexively to give itself the appearance of naturalness and rightness (both empirically and morally). It is an epistemology that is, in other words, ideological.

A deconstruction of the text displays how these points are masked by a rhetoric that provides a sense of inevitableness and naturalness. A rhetoric that papers over the crevasses. It also reveals the textuality of the discourse. Its natural play of signifiers, its metaphoricity, its productivity. And it shows too, the political aspirations to contain and elide that textuality; to stem the play of the signifiers, to deny its metaphorical nature and to present product rather than productivity. Again rhetoric hides these movements. It is a rhetoric that cements the relations of signifier and signified, and to present the movement from signifier to concrete signified as automatic, obvious, linear and natural. It is a rhetoric that presents those proposed relations as the only right and legitimate ones. It denies alternatives and the natural polysemousness of the text. A deconstruction seeks to release the possibilities of meaning in the text - actively displays the multiplicity of meaning. The text of participation is shown to be productive. There is an attempted closure but it has only partial, practical success. The very effort to control, via numerable rhetorics, actually creates its own points of disjunction and contradiction in the text. For in-

stance, there is the rhetoric that presents participation as something new, exciting and dynamic. The company presents itself as being 'in step with the times' - indeed as being at the vanguard of modern industrial practice. This ties in with the revealed company cultural features of 'progression' and 'dynamism'. Whilst in the same text there is also the rhetoric that attempts (one of the ways) to retrieve participation, to lessen its strangeness. There is a move here to present participation as not new. It is something that is already going on in some ways. It is only a question of management style. It does not replace existing procedures. The company here as traditional and conservative. These two areas of the text are in contest. There is a disjunction, an incoherence here that the rhetorics fail to mask (unless a meta-rhetoric is brought into play that disguises the division in the text at that point).

There are potential rifts, contradictions and omissions in the text that are exploitable by any discourse that confronts it interrogatively. There are, within the text itself, multiple positions of intelligibility if they are recognised as such. The practical failure of the efforts to contain and control the meanings of participation depends upon the emergence of a discourse that confronts these aporia, contradictions, paradoxes and alternative positions in the text. It is part of my contention that the degree to which the shop-floor came to a position to challenge the management definition is a function, at least in part, of the exploitation of these points in the text and the discovery of different and alternative positions of intelligibility in relation to the text. It is also a function of them firstly, fully entering the discourse, making it discursively familiar so as to be able to recognise its textual possibilities. Part of the ability to formulate definitions that were threatening, depended, ironically, on

a literal recycling of the management rhetoric. To take the rhetorics of management and to play them back at times and in contexts of situations that differed from their original entrance into the discourse. There were times too when different rhetorics are put together to destructive effect. The juxtaposition of two different rhetorics constructed to serve different purposes in different contexts of situation is potentially to shatter those rhetorics or at least to reveal their nature. Finally the challenge of the shop-floor to the dominant definition depends to a degree on the ability of them to develop their own text of participation, to then engage in their own strategies of rhetorical closure, and inclusion and exclusion of alternatives.

The meanings of participation, then, are not readily displayable, their place is in text and in discourse. Unfortunately the processual nature of text ensures that it too has a certain opacity. In this section I have attempted to reveal something of the nature of text and how the notion is applicable to the participation context at Tridy. It also prefigures some of the features that I want to pursue in subsequent sections. In some ways there is a rehearsal here of some future modes of explication. The theoretic preamble presented here will be taken up in more detail in what follows. I hope the reader is also alive to the realisation that something of the textual nature of participation has been displayed in those preceding, more or less, descriptive sections of the development of definitions of participation at Tridy.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINITIONAL VACUUMS

Perhaps one of the first points to be noted from the reported narrative of the Tridy experience is the initial disparity in the complexity, degree of knowledge and sophistication of different parties discourse in relation to participation. It will be recalled that from preliminary discussions with the shop-floor it became clear that the notion of participation had not exercised them greatly in the past. 'Participation' was not a common feature of their routine discourse, and particularly not in relation to their working environment. A distinction was made between 'everyday' and, what were termed 'technical' meanings of participation. Language relating to the first was limited and vague and in relation to the latter was in most cases non-existent. For many people on the shop-floor 'participation' had a severely restricted chain of signifying relations. They were for the most part unable to articulate what they took participation to mean, especially in the context of work-place relations. Such articulations as did arise were cursory and of a very general nature; or else in relation to technical meanings, on some rare occasions, were highly specific, relating to distinctive and isolated portions of the wider academic-industrial discourse on participation. To this extent I choose to characterise the discourse of the shop-floor as possessing a 'definitional vacuum' in relation to participation.

This is to be contrasted with some of the more coherent and developed meanings amongst company management, especially senior management (the reader is referred notably to the section on Senior Management Discourse). This is not to say that management as a

whole were conversant with the burgeoning literature on participation, rather that certain members of senior management who were directly and centrally involved in the scheme had already established a fairly elaborate and sophisticated discourse about, and in relation to, participation. Furthermore, talk about participation had already begun to be related to other key facets of, what might be termed, the wider company discourse. And these are just the people who would be involved in the development of the scheme and in presenting the scheme to the workforce. The same is true of the consultants.

The thing about vacuums of course, is that the space they occupy is wont to be filled once access has been gained to that space. The emptiness of the shop-floor discourse is likely to be made full once that space has been drawn attention to. The introduction of the signifier 'participation' reveals that space and its continued presence in surrounding discourse draws attention to the emptiness that requires fulfilment. There is little tolerance for continued emptiness, a compulsion exists to allocate some meaning to that which is initially devoid of meaning. It would be bizarre if the signifier 'participation' remained in some kind of free-floating and unattached state for any period of time without forming the relationships that would provide some texture of meaning.

The existence of the definitional vacuum is of significance for the dynamics of the definitional process as they developed in the context of Tridy. The disparity in the definitional sophistication in those early stages establishes a foundational relationship upon which subsequent battles for control of the signifying process are conducted. The gap will be filled. And it is likely that the gap could be filled by those who already have a developed sense of participation. The vacuum is not really able to offer any resistance to

whatever seeks to invade its space. Once the seal is breached then whatever is adjacent is likely to seep into the gap and fill the vacuum. there is a ripeness in the emptiness, a ripeness for fulfilment from whatever source. Those that have something capable of occupying the space find it easy to assert and insert it; to invade the emptiness with their own promise of presence and plenitude.

What those who have a developed sense of participation have to offer is, in the short term at least, sufficient. Those members of senior management privy to the development of the scheme, and the consultants professionally engaged to promulgate something, have already done the work that constructs a texture of meaning around participation. The state of that texture is not really important at this point. Its very existence in proximity to the vacuum of those others on site is enough for the process to get underway. Whatever is offered-up is likely, at the very least, momentarily, to be capable of providing the substance required to fill the space created. And indeed the space was created; and significantly, created by just those same persons who have the means and the will to fill it in again. The gap was created by the introduction of the term 'participation' by the members of senior management and the consultants. The introduction of that term created a lacunae in the discourse of others on site; it circumscribed or carved out a space and by its continued presence and re-introduction constantly drew attention to that. Whether the emptiness would have proved naturally intolerable to the workforce is not clear; one suspects from the apathetic and sceptical response, that it may not necessarily have been. However, there was no rush to fill the space from that quarter which left the way open to anything proposed by the managers and consultants. The apathy also meant that whatever was put forward met with little resistance

in the first instance.

In a sense, then, the management group had created the space themselves and were immediately in a position to try and fill it again. They were responsible for the generation of the compulsion to provide a texture of meaning that would give participation some new body. The very term was interpolated into the linguistic arena of Tridy by them. The shop-floor had made no expressions in that direction at all. In another parlance they had expressed no felt need; or rather, any expressions of need or desire for change were expressed in a discourse that did not include participation as one of its components. The reader will recall that some of the shop-floor had made reference to the introduction of trade unions at Tridy. For some, that would have been a more natural entree to a discourse that was already familiar and around which they could marshall elaborated textures of meaning. More frequently, industrial relations issues were couched in a form of discourse that was shared by all members of the company; a mode that was rooted in traditionalism and paternalism. There were habitual ways of doing and talking of things at Tridy. There were 'normal channels' and a faith, if unfulfilled, in the ability and inclination of managers to look after the interests of their members. The introduction of participation inveigled a new and unsolicited element of discourse that did not fit readily into the existing and habitual talk of the shop-floor. It did not weave readily into the common textures of meaning associated with industrial relations in their factory.

It had become a part of the consultants doctrine that a felt need could not be expressed in terms of participation by a workforce who had no experience of what participation might mean. This was in response to various studies based on attitude surveys which repute

to show that many members of the industrial workforce show no inclination to be involved in participation. Some of these studies are given a certain sophistication by differentiating between different levels and types of participation. Hence a greater percentage of workers are said to display an interest, or to perceive a need to 'participate' in immediate, work related issues, but far fewer express any interest in being involved in board room level decisions. One can only concur with the view of the consultants, particularly given the presence of a virtual definitional vacuum in relation to participation. For many of the workforce the term participation simply lacked any depth of meaning; there were insufficient relations of difference for the term to assume any textured significance. Expressions of need, or of opinion in relation to such an impoverished lexical item would not surprisingly be, at best, cautious and at worst unutterable.

However, the very introduction of the term and its subsequent revelation of a possible emptiness, begins to create its own needs. The proposal of the term and the proffered definitions that accompany it begin to demand some sort of response. From the consultants point of view, certain dilemmas emerge. The definitional vacuum amongst the shop-floor requires a certain amount of recasting of the terminology into a form more easily recognisable in some instances. But already that act begins to define the expression in particular and familiar ways. The way in which it is recast is potentially very formative of the definitions that begin to develop in that group. The apathy and mistrust also embodies a requirement that the shop-floor be encouraged towards a response. This assuming, of course, that there is a drive amongst certain parties in the organisation that something happen; that the scheme does proceed. Some of the factors related to that drive amongst senior management have already been explored.

What is interesting is that those factors, and the reasons behind them, become part of the definition of participation that is presented by management.

In terms of the definitional process the situation is such that certain groups at Tridy are responsible not only for formulating the questions, as it were, but also of being ready to put forward some of the answers. The differentiation in preliminary definitional capacity and sophistication is a significant element in the relations of power within the company; particularly in relation to the control of the signifying processes in which the meanings of participation are emergent. Those who have already developed and elaborated a texture of meaning in relation to participation are likely to be in a position to offer up, and have accepted, their definition, by a group whose own discourse reveals an absence in that domain. That power is made more pungent by the fact that the group who are fortunate to be able to offer relatively cogent definitions of the term are also the same group who introduce the term into the verbal foray in the first place.

There is a hidden subtlety here. In a supposed attempt by the company to change some of its work relations, to do work on its industrial relations practices, it introduces an entirely new term with a surrounding paraphenalia of fresh associations and implied structural alterations. I would suggest that the very newness of the language has a kind of double-edged effect. In the first instance it is unsettling to the workforce by its difference and because it opens up and highlights a previously unrecognised gap in their discourse. It introduces a new element into the verbal machinations between management and workers. It is unsettling because they have not developed a talk that will cope with this newness. They find themselves initially unable to bring a meaningful definition to enclose the expres-

sion, and thus find themselves vulnerable to the proposed definitions of others. On the other hand the newness also makes it encumbent on management to take the opportunity to fill that gap with a convincing and, for them, appropriate definition. There is risk in this. On their own account the record of industrial relations at the company was good. A newness is potentially unsettling. It could result in a fundamental renegotiation of the groundwork for industrial relations in the company. If the definitions they put forward fail to convince or are in some other way found lacking, then the control of the integration of the new element could slip from their control and the outcome be uncertain. But at the same time its newness and the consequent unsettling effect on the shop-floor provides them with an opportunity to attempt to constitute a definition that suits their purposes.

Certain definitions do begin to appear, to be put forward. There are efforts on the part of management and the consultants to propose particular definitions of participation, and to generate sufficient energy in the company for something to happen. The initiative to define the situation is taken by these groups and that fact has important implications particularly when considered in conjunction with the definitional vacuum of the shop-floor.

If we accept that there is a potential proliferation of meanings in association to participation, then the provision of specific definitions on the part of one group in the situation, in the face of the absence of definitions from another group, gives that first group some chance of initially controlling that proliferation and limit the meanings that may emerge in that particular context. Furthermore, the effective presentation of specific definitions by one group may act to delimit the possibility of alternative and counter definitions

emerging; especially if other groups initially have a restricted discourse in relation to the defined area. A forceful presentation of a definition may serve to so frame the situation that only a limited and manageable range of alternatives arise and enter the game.

There is a tendency for the presence of one definition to, at least temporarily, exclude other potential definitions; although our pragmatic affairs do not necessarily conform to the formally logical laws of excluded middle and identity in quite that way. But within a given code of discourse the presence of one encompassing definition tends to force out and debar other conflicting or alternative definitions. Thus, if a situation is defined as a formal executive business meeting, there is an implied code of discourse that temporarily excludes talk relating to marital trauma and the emergence of a definition that re-sites the meeting as a marriage guidance session. A given definition, if it is socially accredited comes to occupy a central place in the discourse at that time; it carves out a linguistic terrain and establishes boundaries.

More importantly perhaps, the provision of one definition begins to constrain the possibilities for alternative definitions emerging in that situation. An alternative definition may require an alternative linguistic code. In the case of Tridy, for instance, the shop-floor might have been able to transpose the definitions of participation by making them part of a trade union discourse had one been more readily available. A trade union discourse would have an accompanying code in which the meanings of participation could have circulated. The relation of such definitions in relation to those put forward by management is not entirely clear, but there would have been some sense of the shop-floor owning the definitions and of the possibility of a challenging alternative emerging. There is a sense,

of course, in which a significant switching of codes entails the complete breakdown of interaction. To go back to the trivial example above; if some members at the meeting continue to define it as an executive business meeting whilst others continue to define it as a marriage guidance session, then there is likely to be a fundamental breakdown in the dialogue unless some remedial work is done to accomodate those two positions. There needs to be some meeting point between the definitions and the language codes employed in a situation for any interaction to proceed. To what extent a consensual definition shared by those present is necessary is yet to be fully explored in this text.

Reflexively, in writing a text of this kind, an author is aware of the boundaries of the codes that may be seen by categories of reader as legitimate. A text defined as a thesis has distinctive if imprecise linguistic obligations. But of course in the reader-writer relationship there is less scope to negotiate an agreement on what constitutes a plausible, workable and legitimate definition. The writer cannot define by dictat in advance, the definitional grounds of his own text, although he may attempt to. Whatever definition he embodies in his text is capable of being subverted by a critical reader. But neither the writer nor the reader is a total dupe in that situation. The writer, especially in the refined instance of a doctoral thesis, is made aware, often, of expected and presumed shared linguistic codes that for purposes other than mere comprehension his text is supposed to participate in. The writer can attempt to control his meanings; notably by a careful consideration of his rhetorical ploys and a matching of the rhetoric in his text to that that hibituates the discourse of those potential readers he shoots his arrows at. There is a precarious balance between the

conscription of those obligations and speaking in fresh ways; there is a dangerous chasm between talking in corresponding codes that are well geared and talking in alien and alienating codes where there is no point of engagement. I do not wish to digress too much here, but I want the reader/the reader wants - to be aware that the definitional process discussed in this text is also displayed in this text. And secondly I want to draw attention to the frightening point at which to share definitions, to talk in the same code, is to re-say things, to recycle the familiar and thus not be able to talk newly. Whereas, to talk in opposing and alien codes is to be condemned to permanent misunderstanding. (I could say that this point is the fundamental tension at the heart of this text; that here lies its internal contradictions, and its aporia; that around this paradox resides the inclination and the need for rhetoric. But perhaps that is leading the reader by the nose too much.)

But looking outwards again the definitional vacuum has ome other implications. I can lead into them by reference to a question posed by Peter Robinson (1977) in talking about the place of rules in the change process: "Do we need to see alternatives before we can become aware of the meaning of what we do?"

I don't want to attempt to answer that question directly but to consider some of the ways it has a bearing on the definitional position of the shop-floor at Tridy. The question does have a bearing, of course, on the central conception of meaning explored in this text; namely that all meaning is relational. Meaning is constituted by relations of difference among the signifiers of the language used in the situation. participation becomes meaningful to the shop-floor when it is capable of being put into relationship with other signifiers that form associations with other, familiar elements.

Robinson's question approaches this issue at a broader point. The distinction between 'differences' and 'alternatives' is one of level of analysis. It is the case that 'participation' only becomes meaningful in relation to other things, but it is not certain that that relationship must be one of alternative. There is a compulsion (from whence it comes is a neglected problematic) to make binary oppositional relations of distinction. These are ubiquitous in Western talk: 'good-evil'; 'black-white'; 'democratic-fascistic'; 'presence-non-presence', etc. But whether these relations are necessary and sufficient for the emergence of meaning or whether they are mere linguistic proclivities is very much at issue. Does an alternative imply that sort of relationship in any case? What might be asked is do the shop-floor personnel need to see an alternative to the proposed definitions of management for the item, 'participation' to acquire meaning?

I think it is clear that to see those relationships in simple contrastive or strictly alternative terms is to miss the complexity of them. To pose the relationship: 'Participation' - 'non-participation' (or some lexical expressant of non-p.) as the basis of meaning is to avoid the processual nature of the emergence of meaning. It is to articicially fix the interplay of signifiers at an arbitrary (relatively) point. In the context of Tridy 'participation' built up a texture of meaning that did not rely on such a single specifiable opposition. 'Participation' was associated with 'communication', for instance, and with 'influence', and a whole galaxy of other relationships. Each point of contact is marked by a relation of what is present with what is absent in ways that <u>may ultimately</u> be founded on contrastive units. So, 'participation' forms a syntagmatic relation with 'influence' but 'influence' is in a paradigmatic relation-

ship to, say, 'control'; and that may be said to be a contrastive relation. But it might also be said to be in a paradigmatic relationship with, say 'power' which clearly is not.

The shop-floor do not, in that sense, need a discrete alternative to the general notion 'participation' before it comes to have meaning for them any more than any other group requires that sort of direct and simple relationship. A child may need to see things in those terms but years of familiarity with a language has already provided adults with an elaborate arrangement of relationships. Indeed, so elaborate that the core (if there in fact ever were any) binary relations are irretrievably embedded. In fact to propose such a core set of relationships is to begin again that endless and destructive search for the originary source of meaning and to attempt to fix the constant play of signifiers into immutable and eternal basic relationships.

What they do need are some relations of difference for the item to have meaning. The scope for developing an alternative is not necessarily to counter with an oppositional relationship straight off, but to begin to build up differing textures of meaning based on those finer tuned relationships of difference and similarity. Thus where management might propose a syntagmatic relationship between 'participation' and 'involvement', they might begin to establish a relationship between 'participation' and 'influence'. A nuance of difference, but potentially a significant one. The seeds of a radical alternative begin to emerge. The counter proposal of an oppostional definition from the outset might have the consequent of terminating the dialogue before it even begins. If the shop-floor had countered, and insisted on a response to the interjection of the term 'participation' with some form of talk that foregrounded dominance or unilateralism

then talk about participation as such may have grounded to a halt; unless the two parties agreed to define participation in terms of totalitarianism or the like.

The possibility of alternative definitions resides equally fundamentally in the ability to perceive the range of feasible paradigmatic relationships. And it is here that the shop-floor's definitional vacuum becomes a real problem. If management propose a syntagmatic relationship of 'participation' - 'involvement', which they did at some points, then the item 'involvement' forms paradigmatic relationships with a whole range of possible other items. The syntagmatic relationship that is there, that is manifest in the language-in-use, is made meaningful by its paradigmatic relationship to what is absent, to what is not there but could have been. The search for the 'negative' in the text is fraught with difficulties. What is not there is crucial to the meaning of what is there, but the warrant for asserting what those absent points might be is highly problematic. It is difficult to see how one can progress beyond a speculation based on the familiarity of the language actually employed, and an extrapolation, from an analysis and a closeness to what is there over a period of time, to those points beyond the visible text. However, the point has already been made that there is some sense in talking of the context of the situation being, at least partially, determining of pragmatically admissable paradigmatic relations. But for the shop-floor, the grounds of an alternative might well be said to lie just in those unexpressed regions of the management's discourse. How they perceive those paradigmatic relations will determine much of what they read the management text to be saying. It is a crucial point, of course, that whilst in the profferring of a definition the management

group may exert self-conscious control over the syntagmatic relations their discourse produces, they have virtually no direct control over the perceived paradigmatic relations and how they are 'read' by others. It is precisely at this point that rhetoric becomes a vital factor. The strength of the rhetoric guides the hearer/reader to make just those paradigmatic relations that match with the espoused language and do not unsettle the project being put forward.

The realisation of those paradigmatic relations would depend in part on the existence of some developed discourse surrounding the visible items, and it is precisely this that the shop-floor lacked in the preliminary stages. Participation had little meaning for the shop-floor initially because they were unaware of the possible relations it could form with other signifiers; they had not developed a texture of meaning around the term. In this sense they could be said to have a 'restricted linguistic code' in relation to participation. The item would have some vague associations from its occurrence in routine talk, but the placing of the item in the context of the company and its industrial relations creates new possibilities for the item that render it unfamiliar. The item is relocated, and those more familiar 'chatty' associations become somewhat redundant. The new syntagmatic relations put forward by management are unfamiliar and unsettling for the traditional everyday associations that the shop-floor members may have been used to. It is hardly surprising then, that potential paradigmatic relations are not 'read' by the shop-floor either. Thus the derivation of alternative and challenging definitions is made highly unlikely at that stage.

There is one obvious alternative to those new things being proposed that is readily available to the shop-floor; namely the

existing arrangements and the discourse that accompanies them. The status quo ante can be seen as a possible alternative to any interpolated newness. It can provide a point of comparison and contrast to those fresh definitions. The discourse of the status quo has the advantage of being wholly familiar; the shop-floor would have worked in that discourse for some time and would have a strongly developed texture of meaning. (That discourse being partly represented in an earlier section.) The shop-floor can talk confidently and sensibly from within that code; and know too that it is shared and participated in by their management. It is not perhaps surprising that most early conversations with the shop-floor rapidly elided talk about participation as such and travelled back to talk of the familiar; and in familiar ways. The members were happy to talk about their routine work problems and about work relationships as they then existed, and to talk about those relationships in a language that had passed as appropriate up to that point. The existing language of industrial relations matched the context of the formal structural arrangements at Tridy. There was a moaning and groaning script that had become virtually institutionalised. Talk in the form of grievances were supposed to be presented to management who would then take the necessary action as they saw fit. It was a language in which the workforce were not seen as responsible for making decisions and where the problems were given over to management for their, hopefully, benevolent but unilateral decision. The right of managers to make those decisions was not only seen as natural it was taken as an awesome duty, a burden that goes with the position of authority. There were 'normal channels' to go with the 'normal' talk. In the absence of a developed language surrounding the new term, 'participation', the shop-floor happily scurried for the familiar shelter of this traditional language. It

is interesting that that mode of language remained with many of the shop-floor throughout; they refused, or were unable, to adopt the newer language. Some of the reps. too found it difficult initially to transcend the habitual way of handling and discussing industrial relations issues; for quite some time issues were presented in the 'moaning groaning script' and management were handed the problem and were expected to come up with the answers.

From the management's point of view the presentation of their definitions also covertly included an alternative; or rather alternatives, in complicated ways. For them, too, there was a sense of the status quo standing for an alternative that contrasted with what they were now putting forward. Participation was obviously a newness, it was presented at times in terms of the actions of a forward thinking, up-to-date and modern, dynamic company. From the early sections of the thesis, it will be recalled that such a conception was an integral part of the company culture. There was a self presentation in terms of a youthful, dynamic and progressive company. Some of this is associated with its Americanicity; a bare fact in one sense but also part of a self-consciously contrived image. 'Move forward with participation' might have been the slogan. There was also the imparted sense that the company was marching in step with the times, that the introduction of participation was an historical inevitability and that the company were merely pre-empting that in sensible ways thereby retaining control over their own and the members affairs. The situation was defined, to some extent as one of change. However, from another perspective the company were relatively happy with the existing situation. The company was highly profitable, and industrial relations problems, on the formal indices at least were minimal. There was a feeling that these good things should not be damaged.

There is also an unexplicated awareness that newness and change are potentially unsettling; they offer up at least the possibility for a re-negotiation of positions and relationships. So participation was also presented in ways that minimised the newness and the chanciness. The existence and perpetuation of 'normal channels' was reaffirmed. There were few explicit references to changes in the fundamental structures of superior-subordinate relations. And most crucially perhaps, participation was talked about in conjunction with a familiar company discourse and was made to associate with recognisable and established metaphors of structure. As has been pointed out, participation was made to 'lay over' a traditional and familiar hierarchical structure. In this way, then, participation wanted to be both new, different and a change; but also, merely an addition to existing arrangements and not a replacement for the status quo. It would be the task of the rhetoric of the presentational discourse that would attempt to paper over those dualities and potential contradictions. The rhetoric of the proposed definitions would be made to vary with context to attempt to maintain both these (and other) conceptions. The rhetoric would efface these differences and seek to present a coherent and unified definition. These points will recur and be considered in greater detail later.

In some ways, and at some times, participation is to be made to appear as an alternative to the status quo (and hence the status quo becomes a possible alternative to the definitions of participation for the shop-floor). At other times the sense of alternative is denied. Participation is not a replacement it is only an adjunct to existing relations. Participation is not a virulent newness capable of destroying the traditions of the company, it is a supplement grafted on to the healthy body of the established company. In this

way even the possible alternative of the shop-floor in which they oppose 'participation' and 'the status quo' is anticipated and its teeth drawn.

Another 'alternative' emerges fairly openly in the management discourse. Here both participation and the status quo are put against the possibility of the presence of a trade union in the company and the implications that would have for relationships and arrangements. The language code of 'shop-stewards', 'pay negotiations' etc. would be potentially applicable to talk about the industrial relations issues that participation is supposed to cover. The company tends to present this as some ever present dark threat lurking just outside the gates of the castle waiting for a chance to gain entry and wreak its normal havoc. Fortunately for management, it does not exist as a real alternative for the shop-floor since most seem to concur with that image. There is a commonality in the language of the shop-floor and management at this point in which trade unions are seen at least as unnecessary and at most as a destructive, combative element that would disrupt the smooth running of the company and would in fact interfere with informal channels and personal contact that many see as the best way of achieving the results they require.

Management feel relatively easy then,about an open display of the differences and contrast between participation and the introduction of trade unionism. So confident in fact that they are prepared to declare on occasion that one of the reasons for the introduction of particiption was to forestall the possible emergence of trade unions at Tridy. This is sometimes linked with the view that impending legislation on industrial democracy might create a requirement that companies organise their participative structures around the machinery of the trade unions. The display of these portions of

their discourse is monitored and not available readily to all people at all times. Indeed it may have been ill-conceived to release it at all, since many of the workforce began to maintain that it was the only motive the company had for introducing the scheme, thereby engendering a lot of negative scepticism.

The important thing to bear in mind thus far is that the shop-floor had a definitional vacuum in relation to participation at the beginning of the project compared with a management discourse that had developed fairly sophisticated textures of meaning. The shop-floor had a restricted language; there were limited chains of signifiers circulating around and from participation, compounded by the introduction of the term into an unfamiliar context. This put them in a position where it was difficult to read into the paradigmatic relations of the definitions being put to them and to perceive alternative formulations. Such obvious alternatives that were apparent at a broader level were to some extent already handled in the management definitions in ways that confused their sense of alternative, or else they were ruled out by a collusive shared value system.

The shop-floor were unable to articulate alternate definitions of participation in the face of those presented by others. They found it difficult to articulate around those definitions provided by management and the consultants and frequently reverted to their habitual discourse for work related matters. The definitional vacuum and this inability to conjure alternatives made them vulnerable to any other definitions projected into the linguistic arena at the time. Management had the ability and the authority to establish and rule on the mode of discourse in which all company matters were discussed. If the shop-floor wanted to take part in that, to be able to talk to management, they are almost obliged to abide by those ground rules.

Management had introduced these new possibilities of discourse and were determined that subsequent discussions should proceed on that basis. The shop-floor could not ignore that and would have to come to terms with it. It was something of a fait accomplis; at some stage it was in their own interests that they at least be able to enter that mode of discourse if only to begin to redefine its textures. Initially, unless they take the risky option of not engaging management at all at that level of discourse, they are obliged to begin to take on board the language and the definitions on offer. The emptiness must be filled with something, and the most obvious, likely, and perhaps prudent source for the substance with which to accomplish that, is the definitions being profferred by management and the consultants. The active presentation of specific definitions begins to have important implications for the control of the signifying process and for the potential for alternatives to emerge. The definitional vacuum from a negative standpoint has already been shown to have some important consequences in terms of the generation of alternatives, but when this is coupled with an active and at times skillful and manipulative presentation of particular version(s), then the constraining effect on the emergence of other meanings begins to take effect. At the most simple level, the installation of specific meanings begins to negate the possibility of the emergence of others.

With the active presentation of management and the consultants' definitions, the space in the shop-floor discourse begins to be filled. The members of the shop-floor become increasingly exposed to the terms and textures of meaning already developed in the management discourse. Since they are the only ones on offer originally they are likely to have at least some credence. However, their ultimate effectiveness depends on a number of factors, not least of which is

the rhetoric in which the presentations are couched. Other factors might relate to some of the traditional research on the effectiveness of communications. It has been proposed, for instance, that the perceived source of the message and the credibility of that source would be important factors in the effectiveness of a communication. Bearing in mind the current culture of the organisation, in particular the traditional discourse in which many of the shop-floor collude with the established hierarchies of the company and the right and duty of managers to take responsibility, to be the initiators and to make decisions, one might suspect that there is an inclination on the part of the shop-floor to, at least, take seriously and give some credence to the offerings of management. The consultants have a part to play here too. They are presented by the company, if not obviously self-presented, as 'experts' in a broad sense. After all they are University academics, one of professorial status. Such things are valued in society, there is a certain kudos, even, or perhaps especially, amongst working class groups. There is, it is true, also some suspicion; but also a type of mystery. Academics occupy an unusual position in relation to many other aspects of society, their activities are not readily available or understood. This very mysteriousness makes their proclamations in the public domain of, say, industry, equally mysterious, or at least as a cause for interest and curiosity. Experts, too, are revealers of secrets, they hold the keys to areas of understanding that are not easily accessed by the layman. They are supposed to be in a position to give light to what otherwise appears as mysterious. And participation, as we have already established, <u>was</u> mysterious to the shop-floor, especially when it is introduced into the world of industrial relations. It is interesting to note that one of the shop-floor reps. actually referred to one of the consultants as a "magician".

The talk of people positioned in this way is likely to be received with a degree of interest and respect. These aspects of self presentation together with other presentational effects relating to such things as the physical features of the setting are important factors in the definitional process and will reappear as we proceed, but they should not deflect our attention from rhetorical features of the verbal presentation.

T.J. Scheff in his article "Negotiating reality: notes on power in the assessment of responsibility" (1973) makes a number of points about the "negotiation process" which are embodied in the activities of defining situations. He makes the point that those who are in a position to exercise some control over the format of the conversation are likely to be able, by virtue of that, to retain some manipulative control of the emerging definition of the situation. In the case of Tridy it was the management group that initiated all early talk relating to participation. There is a simple sense in which those who take the initiative and put in the first bid, as it were, who provide the first more or less comprehensive definitions, are in a strong position to direct the course of subsequent discourse. This is particularly the case given the apathy and inability of the shop-floor to marshall any coherent alternative definitions of their own. Management and the consultants assume responsibility for mapping out the textures of meaning in relation to participation. They are able to put before a confused and unprepared audience a relatively coherent and developed discourse. This sets the pace and interpolates textures of meaning where otherwise there is simply a gap.

Scheff also makes the point that certain factors apparent to those in the situation might lead to a ceding of the control of the definitional process to particular parties. Thus members may feel

inclined to cede the right or the power to define the situation on the basis of a perceived greater authority, expertise and/or the ability to reward or punish. Clearly in the context of Tridy all of these factors may be said to be present. I have already referred to the espoused expertise of the consultants. Managers, too, by the very nature of their position and status in the work environment are held to be experts on matters related to managerial activity. The tautology here does not necessarily lessen the effect. For instance, one of the leading members of the management group involved in the establishment of the scheme was the personnel manager, Macheath. His formal and recognised area of expertise concerns matters of work relationships and industrial relations on site, as such he would be expected to be able to talk sensibly and importantly about such matters, including participation. Scheff does not articulate the nature of 'authority', but who can doubt that in a traditional company management are not perceived as possessing greater authority, at least in relation to major aspects of the work environment. This is born out by the reports of the shop-floor attitudes towards management responsibility and rights outlined earlier. But these formal attributive qualities are, I feel, insufficient to guarantee the effectiveness of a proposed definition.

Laurie Taylor (1976) draws attention to the fact that the inequality or imbalance of power in such situations is insufficient to always explain the imposition of a particular definition. He rebels against the commonly held view that certain categories of persons (he cites judges, social workers, police, therapists, psychiatrists) are formally in a position to control the others' definition of the situation. This partial attack on Labelling theory seeks to question the thesis that asserts that for these categories of people:

> "...it was their words which were particularly powerful in constituting social reality, in pursuading the captured deviant to reconceive his identity. It was their sentences (in the legal and semantic sense) which remade men." (p.33)

He makes the important point that even given this differential power, the possibility will exist that there may be 'alternative vocabularies' in which those words can be re-situated thereby giving them a different meaning. Laurie Taylor deals with the defining of selves by the attachment of labels of deviance and the possibilities for transcoding those labels into another discourse thereby altering their meaning, but one can see the application to other definitional situations. The point is part of the larger one about the 'in principle' impossibility of fully controlling meaning. The intended meaning of the applied label can be subverted by those to whom it is applied. It can be re-interpreted in fresh ways, it can be transposed into a different vocabulary, a different code. The ascriber of the label cannot retain control over the meaning of that which he projects.

This ability to construct alternative vocabularies is crucial as the scheme at Tridy develops. With it lies the possibility of putting up counter-definitions that challenge those presented by management. However, Scheff's analysis is still relevant, especially in the preliminary stages. The differential in power and the perceived authority and expertise of the management group (including the consultants) is an important factor initially. This is particularly the case when one considers that the shop-floor did not have a developed discourse into which they could transpose the definitions being put forward. There did not exist at that point an alternative vocabulary in which the talk of management could be re-sited and thus give the possibility of alternative textures of meaning. It is only

when the shop-floor group begin to develop the discourse in relation to participation, that they are able to begin to challenge the definitions of management and to put forward definitions of their own.

The important point about the power and authority differential is that it enables management to control the introduction of these new features of company discourse. They are responsible for the initiation of the very introduction of the term 'participation'. Their formal position ensures that it enters the public domain at all. Furthermore they have the control over the timing and the nature of that introduction. The management have control over a whole gamut of information dispersal mechanisms within the company, from the house newspaper, to informal memos. This ensures that what they have to say at least gets a high visibility. Broadly speaking they have control of the means of production and distribution of most of the information at Tridy. From the outset, then, they have control of the timing and the nature of the introduction of these new forms. They are able to put their definitions out first and with a wide dispersal and a high visibility. Together with the perceived authority and credibility of the sources of those pronouncements, and other presentational advantages, there was a tendency for what they had to say to swarm into the vacuum of the shop-floor discourse, to expand to fit into the space and occupy it.

Once this is achieved it is more difficult for alternatives to create room for their own emergence. The zeal of that first influx of meanings begins to shape the future possibilities. The provided definitions of the management group indelibly frames the nature of the discourse in that domain. That which is on offer from management represents the only currently available discourse in relation to participation. The occupation of that space maps out a clear domain

of discourse that in the absence of an alternative is more likely than not to be taken on board by those who want, or need, to enter that discourse at some point.

The definitions offered by management creates relations of difference and sameness that give rise to a signifying chain of related items. The syntagmatic relations between, say, 'participation' and 'involvement' and 'communication' and the rest draw the audience into an increasingly complex texture of meaning that becomes self referential. Without a conception that transcends or by-passes that texture, those caught in that web find themselves referencing different portions of the same enclosed texture in their attempts to bring meaning to each point located within it. Participation is defined by reference to these other visible relations that are also provided and the track of meaning takes the searcher from one signifier to the next in a circulating chain that does not free itself from the given texture. The potentials of the paradigmatic relationships remain hidden or curtailed. The perception of the connotational force of the visible signifiers remains limited unless the person is able to develop the discourse within that domain. And it is within the possibilities of the paradigmatic relations that the potential for alternatives resides.

One might even want to say that the range of definitions available to the individual is a function of, as some have put it, the conceptual schemes the individual brings to the situation or is able to bring to bear on the situation. I would prefer to say that it is a function of the range and development of the discourses or linguistic codes he is privy to. In the situation of Tridy the shop-floor members did not have an elaborated definition that they could bring to bear on the new situation. They either had recourse to a familiar company discourse that the talk about participation was to some extent

being made to supplant, or to some vague and underdeveloped everyday discourse in which participation only relates to extra-industrial activities. The range of possible definitions available to the shop-floor members is thereby severely curtailed.

There is, then, a sense of management and the consultants providing definitions for the shop-floor. There is also a sense of the definitions provided by one party locking-in another party. Consider this from the individual level. The way one person in an interaction defines himself enters that interaction and has implications for the way the other parties present will be able to define themselves. Since definitions are by and large emergent features of interactions there is an implied mutual surveillance. Each party, entering the situation with preliminary definitions that include expectations about the other parties and speculations about the other parties expectations about the other. How one party defines himself will have mutual implications for the ways the other party is able to define himself; assuming that there is at least some inclination for the interaction to proceed. Included in one person's definition of the situation will be an implied, or even overt definition of the other. To take a simple example: a person entering a doctor's surgery. The doctor, by various means defines himself as 'doctor' with all that implies about his right to take liberties with that other person that he defines as 'patient'. The very definition of 'doctor' in that particular situation reciprocally defines the other as patient and the interaction proceeds on that basis. This is not to say of course that the process is non-problematic and some mutual disclosure of information and preliminary interactional work may be required before a clear allocation of positions is achieved. There is also scope for error and misunderstanding. The person entering the

surgery may be an unannounced medical rep. The doctor proceeding on the habitual definition that another patient has entered may engender some ribald responses when he declares: "Right, go behind the screen and slip out of your clothes". It is also clear that either party may not accept the definitions proposed by the other; either the way the situation is defined generally or the way that he is being defined by the other. The 'patient' may be a referral from the social services for potential psychiatric treatment, a diagnosis he doesn't recognise or is not prepared to accept. The attempt by the doctor to define the other as 'patient' may be resisted. In such cases there is a danger that the interaction might break down altogether.

This process has an affinity with the theatrical metaphor of "altercasting" employed by Weinstein and Deutschberger (1963) which they define as the "casting (of) alter into a particular identity or role type ... It is a basic technique of interpersonal control." But the term de-emphasises the emergent properties of definitions and makes some assumptions about the ready and stable existence of 'type-cast' roles and identities. There are some typical situations where reciprocal roles are readily apparent. In the classroom the reciprocal relations of teacher and pupil are well established. But even in that type of situation there is constant interactional work that acts to re-confirm the relationship: if you like, a continual re-casting of the pupils into that role, a constant re-presentation of teacherliness on the part of the teacher. The process is always problematical and altercasting has to be achieved. The way it is achieved might be of interest.

The attempt to define oneself and thereby to define others is always and only an attempt, there is no guarantee of success. The

ability to do so is dependent on a host of factors that notions such as 'altercasting' simply gloss. However the fact that the attempt is made, how it is made and its effectiveness are of central interest.

There might be more mileage in suggesting that the definitions that a party offers are not simply a version of the situation, more or less descriptive, but that they might also embody indications, guidelines or prescriptions as to how other parties present might or should also define the situation. There might be a meta-definitional component. That is to say that the provided definition might contain the means or instructions by which others may define the situation. Weinstein and Deutschberger also have something to say in this regard, they refer to the possibility of each parties definitional attempts acting to 'structure the situation for each others perception' (p.453). Others are made to see the possibilities for defining the situation via the definitions provided by their interactional partners. In this sense the definitions offered by one party may embody a kind of definitional frame which provides the means by which other participants may also come to define the situation. Participants may not adhere to the others definition in detail and substance but may locate in those definitions a meta-definitional framework that enables them to construct their definition. For instance, the consultants as part of their presentation of what participation means, might make reference to their experience and things they have witnessed before and declare that this is what happens with participation, that this is what one might come to expect. Such pronouncements may serve as a frame for the audience to order its own subsequent experiences in relation to participation. The audience is taught, or can learn to define things in particular ways.

The provision of a discourse enables an individual to order his experiences in particular ways. The developed discourse of the management and consulting teams provides for the shop-floor a ready-made means of bringing sense to the new situation. To be able to articulate experiences in that way brings an order and a sense to them where there might have been meaninglessness and alienation. The management team then are not only providing particular definitions, they are also providing the means (or at least a means) of understanding. They are providing for the workforce some ways by which they too can begin to define the situation. But these ways are restricted and enclosed by the form of the definitional frame provided, by the nature of the rhetoric in which they are cast.

There is an implied, if not conscious attempt to provide a definitional frame; one way only of defining what is going on. Each given definition and definitional frame asserts itself as primary, as authoritative, absolute and final. By so doing it denies a position to other potential definitions and ways of defining. Alternatives become illegitimate at best or simply unseen at worst. Particular definitions contain an exclusion clause that tends to rule off-limits other formulations. And of course the very provision of a definitional frame; the provision of a particular discourse creates particular ways of working on experiences. The discourse shapes our very perception of events and frames them for us in particular ways. We tend to see things in ways that the available discourse allows us to. Our very potential for seeing things differently is limited. The ascendency of a particular discourse serves then, to limit the very perception of alternatives.

One could say simply that the possibility for alternate or different ways of defining a situation is limited by the extent of a parties' existing knowledge; a point made by Zaltman and Duncan(1977).

And there is an obvious sense in which the shop-floor are simply lacking in knowledge about the extended literature and debate about industrial democracy and the ways in which the notion of participation can be applied to the industrial relations scene. But this knowledge is enclosed in a particular discourse, and it is their unfamiliarity with this that is at issue. There is not so much a body of facts that one could learn in relation to participation, rather there are a range of discourses in which the term circulates, there are particular ways of arranging talk about industrial relations matters that swarm around the notion of participation. A familiarity with those discourses allows individuals to order their experiences in relation to participation and to take part in the debate. The reader is in any case referred to the discussion of the relationship between language and knowledge indexed earlier. The ability to see alternatives depends very much on the participation of the individual in a range of differing discourses. It depends on his ability to perceive the extent of the paradigmatic relationships derived from what is given in one definition and to untangle and analyse the string and structuring of the syntagmatic relationships. It is the function of the rhetoric of those who seek to present a particular, coherent and authoritative formulation to make their syntagmatic relations seem obvious, natural and sensible and to guide the reader/hearer towards specific or constrained paradigmatic relations.

Those proffering a definition, and seeking to have their formulation accepted and accredited may be construed as 'writing' a definition. In 'writing' their text they are careful to pay attention to the structure, to the sequence and arrangement of words, and with the connotations of the words they used. They wish to describe their position, to make the meaning of what they have to say clear. They

want the reader to 'read' the text in a particular way; one that foregrounds the definition they wish to perpetuate and not any others that might be contrary or undermining to their project. An aware 'writer' would attempt to ensure that the reading he wanted was in fact made. He might be said in that case to be building a 'reading' into what he writes. He would seek to provide a reading in the text itself. A reading that makes itself readily available to the reader; that jumps off the page, as it were, at him and grabs him by the throat. A reading that will seem irresistably appropriate. Furthermore a reading that dominates and denies any space to other, challenging readings.

Thus at Tridy, management, together with the consultants are trying to write a participation 'text' that embodies specific meanings and contains the means by which it should be 'read' in particular ways that foreground those meanings. A certain texture of meaning is built up consisting of those relations like those between participation and involvement - communication - elections - representation - sharing and so on. Then there are implied and connotational relations of participation with organisational structure, with hierarchies, and the rest. The management rhetoric seeks to control the significations; to foreground certain relationships and background or dispel others. It further seeks to efface the possible contradictions embodied in the contextually determined relations that emerge at different stages and some central inconsistencies and contradictions between portions of the text particularly between the espoused, open relationships and those implied and paradigmatic ones. How this is achieved needs to be exposed; I hope it will be as we proceed. The rhetoric wants to make the relations presented seem to the reader as the natural, indeed as the only ones. The rhetoric seeks to position the reader

so that his intelligibility of the text is guided and constrained, so that he acquiesces to the particular reading desired by the writer. So that a reading is made highly visible in the text such that the reader is compelled to take note of it. And it is not only its visibility as such but the fact that that specific reading is made to appear as the 'right' and proper one to be made from the text.

Is there any sense in talking of socially legitimate and appropriate alternative definitions? That is, are there constraints on the range of possible alternatives based on some kind of wider social tolerance of what is acceptable and permissable? I think that there clearly are but the way we talk about those constraints and how we ground them is important. Lindesmith and Gagnon, (1964) for instance, talking of the way individual drug addicts adapt to their potential deviance and the labelling as such by others have this to say:

> "The individual who feels the pressure, selects his mode of adaptation to it, not from a set of specific and fixed forms of behaviour with immutable and universal significance, but from the particular set of alternatives with which his society confronts him and which it defines."

They concur with the view that various interest parties in society are in a position to, and will, define alternatives for others, but they have little to say about how this is achieved. They tend to ascribe that ability to some established structural arrangements and prefigured power positions. Laud Humphreys (1970) commenting on this view in relation to his own study of homosexual adaptation reifies the position even more:

> "These sets of alternatives, which determine the modes of adaptation to deviant pressures, are defined and allocated in accordance with major sociological variables: occupation, marital status, age, race, education etc." (p.130)

He goes on to declare that knowing these sociological variables enables one to predict the mode of adaptation. There is a sociological determinism apparent in this and a way of recuperating phenomena for scientific purposes. There are not an infinite array of styles of adaptation available to the individual, that degree of human freedom is denied. Rather, "... they have been able to choose only among the limited options offered them by society". One could not deny that in practice there tend to be constraints on individuals as to the range of alternatives available to them in defining their situations, but do we come any closer to understanding the processes of that limitation to freedom by simply asserting that "society" determines the boundaries of those possibilities? I would assert that the construction of those boundaries is as much contextually determined as the chosen mode of, say, adaptation. I would deny that s social profile would be in any way sufficient for a prediction of how an individual would respond to a definition or construct his own. The talk (or the text) constructed by one party in which to present their definitions at the same time hopes to provide a specific reading and to prevent the reader/hearer from constructing alternatives that are potentially disruptive.

The question might be asked, from whence does that original definition arise in the first place? The argument regresses. Are there wider societal constraints on the generation of definitions of the situation? Clearly in one sense there are. But again, what sense, and how helpful is it to assert that it is "society" that determines these options? One might suggest that each successive definitional option is created in some prior delineating discourse. There is no end or originary source to this process. There is no final determining prime mover, call it society, or even some potent

individual. The constant interplay and penetration of discourses is a seamless web without boundary or centre. An historical search would be fruitless and misplaced. This is not to say that analytically one cannot locate particular discourses synchronically at a particular point in history, and even make some sense of their inter-relationships diachronically, but a pretence at fixing a discourse terminably and immutably, or of locating its absolute boundaries is and remains just that, a pretence.

Discourses are invoked and applied within contextually determined situations. They have pragmatic purposes on particular occasions. Discourses are recurrent to the extent that these practical purposes are recurrent and to the extent that they are seen to have a likely repeatable efficacy in relation to those purposes. On a grand scale, one might suggest that the Copernican discourse continued to reappear as long as it proved useful, and until it was capable of being replaced by another discourse that more adequately suited the requirements of the time. But, of course, it is not simply a question of changes in practical purposes that can alter a discourse. Discourses are not isolated and discrete, although we might choose to treat them in that way for analytic purposes. Discourses are mutually embedded and interpenetrate each other. They have a certain intertextual quality. Portions of one discourse will bear traces of others; their boundaries are highly fluid for the most part. They may constantly shift in their relationships one to the other. They do manage to establish a relative autonomy in certain situations but this is rarely stable across situations or through time. Portions of an established discourse might slide off to become temporarily a separate one in certain quarters. Fresh relationships are forged and wither away in a ceaseless activity. There is also a telescop-

ing effect, a sort of hierarchy of discourses where a minor discourse is subsumed within a major one. Thus there are vertical as well as horizontal relationships. For example one might consider that there is a discourse on art generally (although the sense of generality is not entirely clear) but within that minor discourses relating to various schools of style. With the same example we might suggest that the discourse surrounding the Surrealist school has an intertextual relationship to the discourses on Expressionism and Impressionism. It is a relatively independent discourse but is clearly invaded by those other discourses. And what can be said about the relationship between the discourse surrounding Surrealism and that surrounding Dadaism? What established them as separate discourses? Did they ever fully achieve an independence? How did they become separated? What relationship do they have with coterminous other schools? How did the Dadaist discourse achieve its own demise? (By denying its own status as discourse?). These complex relationships mean that a change within one discourse is likely to percolate through and have an effect on other discourses that it is in relation to in some way. This can even occur retrospectively such that a change in the discourse that has current coinage will alter the nature of preceding discourses. Careful here. The discourse that used to surround, say, Impressionism is affected and altered in the light of the development of a discourse surrounding Pop Art.

The availability of alternatives depends firstly on the realisation that they exist, and this might be said to depend on the location in the social structure as Phillips suggests (1971). But once again, I would want to say that one's location in a variety of discourses is a more useful way of conceiving of this. An individual's participation and awareness of a range of different domains of dis-

course together perhaps with some metaperspective on their inter-relationship is determining of the perception of possible alternatives. And there, is clearly where the shop-floor were lacking. The discourses in which participation took part both within the context of the company and outside were not widely available, or participated-in, by members of the shop-floor. They were largely unaware of the discourses in the academic and serious business press in relation to the term. The manner in which the term was incorporated into the habitual company discourse, isolated the term from its position in the everyday discourses where it might have been familiar.

CHAPTER 3

ACHIEVING NATURALNESS - IDEOLOGY, RHETORIC AND TEXTURE

INTRODUCTION

In this section I am concerned with relating some of the emerging meanings and the accompanying rhetoric to a developed notion of ideology. It serves to relate the data and its analysis to some broader aspects of the social formation. Perhaps too often work on organisations and work within the interpretive paradigm (see G. Burrell and G. Morgan, 1979) in particular fails to move beyond a self-enclosed micro-perspective. It is a criticism of Goffman, for instance, that his work is:

> "a social theory that dwells on the episodic and sees life only as it is lived in a narrow interpersonal circumference, ahistorical and non-institutional, an existence beyond history and society"
>
> (A. Gouldner 1970 p.379)

There is a supposed failure to relate the interesting ethnography and the described interactional dynamics within social settings to more macro features. There is a supposed failure to connect with issues of power, ideology, stratification, institution and history. The charge lies more correctly at the door of certain other writers, for as Mary Rogers (in Ditton(1980))adequately demonstrates, a close reading of Goffman (particularly in "Frame Analysis" 1974) does reveal his, at least implicit, treatment of these issues.

In relation to organisation, often much of the writing, from Fayol and the universalists onwards, tends to treat of organisations as independent and self-contained entities. Organisation theories again often fail to link aspects of organisation structure and process to wider features of society. This, despite the reverse trend

being established primally by Plato and more relevently by Weber and to an extent, Marx.

Whilst aware of the awesomeness of the concept of ideology, this section (and some to follow) are at least a partial attempt to traverse that space. The concern, though, is not to engage the broader social formation by means of abstraction and reification. Rather, the attempt is to unearth ideology in the language-in-use of organisation members. The link between everyday social interaction, and the micro focus that implies, and the broader features of society lies within the grounds of discourse. Discourse is an embodiment of systems of knowledge, of ideology, of social institutions.

'Texture' in this instance is concerned with portions of the 'text' of participation that can be held to form into more or less cohesive and resistant fabrics of relations. Constructions that are usually founded upon a particular relationship (say 'participation-science') with a semi-bounded, complex interweaving of other relations that serves to situate 'participation' within a familiar discourse. Part of the concern with rhetoric is its place in the realisation of these relations and textures and its ability to make them appear both natural and binds them together (or at least attempts so to do).

IDEOLOGY

It was part of the original conception of Barthes to conceive of ideology as that which makes relations that are arbitrary or merely conventional, appear natural and true. In this sense, ideology comes to masquerade as commonsense: it has something in common with the ethnomethodological conception (Schutzian) of the "taken-for-granted'. With Barthes' reconsideration of the sign the notion of the ideological

force of language reaches a new sophistication. The original Saussurean conception of the signifier-signified relation sees it as by and large a denotational system where the focus is towards that which the sign indicates. The emphasis is on the signified and on what the sign 'stands' for. It was a significant insight on the part of Barthes to suggest that this system itself can operate as a system of connotation; and in that way become a signifier. Considered together as a connotational system, it reveals what the signs imply, rather than what they simply indicate. Silverman and Torode (1980) suggest that on this formulation, "the system of denotation is a rhetoric and the signified is an ideology." As they rightly point out, the formulation is originally fleshed out in 'Mythologies'. The oft quoted example is taken from the essay "Myth Today". In that, Barthes relates the following example:

> "I am at the barber's, and a copy of 'Paris-Match' is offered to me. On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor. All this is the meaning of the picture. But whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me; that France is a great empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag..." (p.116)

It is also then, a reaffirmation of French imperialism, a reposte to those "detractors of an alleged colonialism", Barthes finds confusion in the adherence to strict Saussurean dichotomies. There is a signifier; the image on the cover of Paris-Match; a graphic representation. There is a supposed signified - a Negro soldier saluting the flag. But this too acts, in its totality, as a signifier with its signified being "a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness"; a connotation of rightful and gleeful imperialism. The first system of relations is denotational (the photographic image denotes a black soldier saluting a flag). But as Silverman and Torode (198 p.260) point out:

> "when the whole system of denotation is treated as a signifier it serves as a rhetoric sustaining the ideology of French imperialism. So the sign connotes the free participation of subject peoples in the French Empire. In short it signifies ideology."

Barthes, of course, situates this process within the general one of reading 'myths': the processes of signification and the exact operations of imperialist ideology in which the power and function of connotation create a myth that is perceived as a 'story' that is at once true and untrue. But as already indicated, Barthes made some move away from his position as represented in 'Mythologies'. He came to realise that the practices that he established in 'Mythologies' came to operate a closure; he felt he had come near to establishing a metalanguage under which the languages of 'mythology' can be subsumed and explained. He also came to recognise an absence of reflexivity in relation to his own reading. How is it that he can come to occupy a position that enables him to 'read' myths in the way that he does? Who is the 'reader of myths', and what is his position vis-a-vis the ideology he is supposed to dismantle? What is the warrant for his reading - is he able to transcend ideology? The logocentrism of the text is re-located in this privileged reader of myths, and thus the productivity of language is again repressed.

Implicit in that early version is a notion of the original sign being 'innocent', non-problematic, and neutral; only invaded at some point by a type of meta-language that transforms the relationship to one of ideology. The metalanguage of ideology relies upon this substratum of innocent, arbitrary signs to create the impression of naturalness to its own relations. In the same way that there is a conflation of classic realist writing and bourgeois ideology where the complicity of the texts of classic realism in the support of an underlying ideology is assumed. The texts reflexively support a dominant world view that includes positioning the reader as consumer

in ways already dealt with.

The reinterpretation of the notion of sign could no longer accommodate an account of ideology that rests on the assumption of an 'innocent' sign, and on a relation of signs where the passage from the signifier to the signified was seen as straightforward, linear and transparent. It could not accept either, the notion of the privileged 'reader' somehow able to detach himself from an ideology and able also to cast an all-consuming eye over the play of signifiers and catching and fixing them in time and place.

There is a rejection, then, of the idea that an 'innocent' sign can be 'taken over', as it were, by an ideological discourse. Ideology in this sense is not a meta-language; it is not to be conceived of as a more or less coherent doctrine or set of beliefs with its own mode of discourse, separate from mundane discourse, that invades neutral signs thereby investing them with new meaning. It is not a mere addition, an alternative language mode employable for specific purposes. It is more fundamentally and centrally involved in our signifying processes that that implies. Thus rooted in the very mode of our experiencing, it takes on a 'taken-for-granted' aspect.

This is not to imply that ideology is not present in different domains of discourse. There are domains of discourse, (one might say 'codes'). They are regions of language-use whose formulations reflexively reaffirm and support particular epistemological systems and/or arrangements in the dominant social formation. Instance the oracular discourse of the Azande related much earlier. Ideology enters as the very mode of articulation by which a particular discourse appears and by which it appears as natural and self-fulfilling. It is not a separate 'body politic' of ideas and beliefs independent of language-use that is somehow 'translated' into words on particular occasions. Rather

it is already inscribed in the language of that mode of discourse: it is already a way of speaking and, perhaps, of thinking and experiencing. It follows from this that the Althusserean injunction that no linguistic-usage is ideologically innocent, holds up. Even the language of commonsense (perhaps especially the language of commonsense) is 'theoretical', it has an ideological linguistic form. It cannot, therefore, set itself up as a natural discourse to which all other discourses can be reduced. There are ethnomethodological echoes here again (see H. Sacks. 1963).

Barthes and others came to realise that it is fallacious to collapse language into ideology. Ideology cannot be reduced in any simple manner to language (nor certainly vice versa). But, ideology is inscribed in language, or rather it is inscribed in our signifying practices. The chain of signifiers will be guided by adherence to those articulations that habitually confirm our ways of experiencing the world. In a sense, the play of signifiers is closed-off at those points that it threatens to go beyond the ways we articulate our experience of the world to ourselves and others. This is where ideology intercedes as a point of closure. At the moment of use a word, or utterance, will be sensible to the degree that it participates in the signifying process currently socially agreed to be active. Only those strings of signifiers that are seen as ideologically apposite will be attended to and/or will be articulated. Thus the Azande in a conversation relating to the oracle would not introduce the word 'science', or if they did it would only enter a signifying chain that recuperated it, or retained it within the realms of oracular discourse. This is the force of ideology. The signifying process is controlled in ways that support the dominant discourse such that our experiences, and our articulations pertaining to them, have the appearance of

naturalness. Even contradictions, gaps and challenges, are retrieved by a rhetoric that returns an ideologically sound reading. This process is assisted by the very taken-for-grantedness of the participation of ideology in language. It is a noteworthy point that when society is in transition, when our ways of experiencing are in a state of flux or change, then the inscription of ideology in language becomes visible. Thus, this is the case, to a degree, at Tridy.

There is an obvious connection between this type of conception of ideology and those points in texts that Derrida isolates and begins his deconstructive movement from. Ideology functions in most texts to engender a sense of order and rationality. In classic realist texts it masquerades as coherence, unity of meaning, presence. Ideology sustains and reaffirms those values of authorship, clarity, coherence, transparency that the classic realist text relies upon. It bolsters a denotational reading in which the passage from signifier to signified is clear, natural, truthful. Derrida's deconstruction reveals that conception as illusory, founded upon the rhetorical nature of language. It is easy to see here, then, the force of the dictum that 'the system of denotation is a rhetoric and the signified is an ideology'. Deconstruction, by 'exploding' language, releasing its myriad meaning potential, shows ideology as a mechanism of closure. The supposed coherence of ideology is fragmented, composed not of a natural unity but parsimonious blindness to those other meanings present but 'cast off-limits'.

A social critical practice reveals that any seemingly enclosed system of discourse is, because of the very textuality of language, actually inhabited by an array of inconsistencies, omissions, and contradictions. Ideology functions smooth them out, to supply the adhesive

that retains a circulating order and coherence. The prevalent social formation relies on the continuing sense and appropriateness of its discourses. A critical practice that is itself blind to the tropological nature of language, that pays its respects to the author, and seeks for the origin and unity of meaning, thus colludes with the dominant ideology. As I have already pointed out, realism in such texts is plausible, not because it is a clear representation of reality and things 'as they are', but because it is articulated out of what is already discursively familiar; because it draws upon the ideology inscribed in that language.

Thus in Barthes essay 'Rhetoric of the Image' (1977 pp. 32-51), he analyses a specific advertisement for a brand of Italian food stuffs. He relates how the image of the advertisement operates in ways similar to that outlined in 'Mythologies'. The graphic signs give rise to various signifieds which again operate as signifiers and supply connotational signifieds:

> "There are four signs for this image and we will assume that they form a coherent whole .... (they) require a generally cultural knowledge, and refer back to signifieds each of which is global (for example, Italianicity), imbued with euphoric values."
>
> (p.35)

The 'messages' that can be read in the image are coded (or at least some are, but the difference need not concern us here). The signs of which it is constructed are part of a 'normal system', drawn from a 'cultural code' (the code does not limit the meaning to a single one: but variations in reading are not anarchic - see p.46-7). There is a careful and (at least in advertising) a more or less conscious juxtapositioning of signifiers that generate connotational signifieds that spark off familiar codes, (or one might say, release common stereotypical positions of intelligibility). These 'series' are

'organised in associative fields' that are then accessed. It can then be said that 'This common domain of the signifieds of connotation is that of ideology'. (p.49) He goes on:

> "To the general ideology, that is, correspond signifiers of connotation which are specified according to the chosen substance. These signifiers will be called connotators and the set of connotators a rhetoric, rhetoric thus appearing as the signifying aspect of ideology".
>
> (p.49)

The product thus comes to be 'read' as the signifier of a cultural and ideological signified with its associative values. The rhetoric functions to mask this productive process and to make the reading seem natural and straightforward. The cultural codes are already, in varying forms part of our, as members sharing the culture, system of knowledge. The naturalness of the reading is not the result of a clarity of representation but from the careful juxtapositioning of signifiers that access familiar, ideological codes; because we are familiar with the signifying systems from which they are drawn.

Macherey in his 'A theory of Literary Production' (1978:1966) maintains that even the language of literature is finally the language of ideology. In a form of argument, that perhaps prefigures Derrida and using a different discourse, he maintains that it is just because of its nature as ideological language that literature is a 'faulty' language in that it will ultimately fail to efface those omissions and contradictions that it sets out to. The natural dynamism of ideological language is articicially 'fixed' in literary texts. Its constant play that disguises itself in everyday discourse is halted in literature and its true nature is allowed to surface. Ideology is made to serve the purpose of underpinning an attempt by realist texts to present

order and coherence, an attempt that fails and leaves ideology naked. Macherey claims that this comes about because of the contradiction between the diverse elements drawn from different discourses; the ideological project and the literary form.

The same sense of argument is present in Derrida's deconstructions, although he less often makes the direct link to ideology. The play of language entails the revelation of contradictions and an aporia in the text which it is the task of the critic to locate. These contradictions, gaps and aporia are within the text and are a direct challenge to the ideology that seeks to efface them. A deconstructive practice if properly conducted should, at least by implication, reveal the limits of that particular ideological discourse.

Macherey makes a more overtly Marxist point when he maintains that ideology functions to collude with the attempt to suppress the mode of production of a text. Traditional criticism colludes with that ideology when it effaces the productivity and the process of production of a text and merely presents it as a medium for the representation of some facet of reality.

I have already alluded to Althusser and his definition of ideology, which places ideology not in peoples heads as a separate contained store of beliefs and attitude, but as the actual verbal (mainly) practices by and through which people present their experiences to themselves and others. It has a double-edged quality for Althusser not dissimilar to Barthes notion of myth. Ideology is a fact; is real to the extent that it <u>is</u> the way they orient themselves to others and to the social relations that govern their conditions of existence. But it is imaginary in that it is not necessary (as it seems), and serves to prevent a more complete comprehension of those very conditions and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them.

Or as Althusser (1971) puts it himself, ideology is:

> "not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live."
>
> (p.155)

Again he reiterates the sense in which it is not an esoteric region of discourse but pervasive of our everyday regions of discourse. Indeed it becomes a taken-for-granted, which is, of course, part of its force. In its presence we have a recurring experience of re-affirmation and comfort. This obviousness contrives to masquerade the reality that ideology and its discourse is actually an incomplete language, its pretensions to offer unity, coherence etc. are mere facade. It is a partial language of contradiction and incoherence. Ideology serves to disguise those aberrations and thus support the social formation that is founded upon them and which depends upon the continuation of order and sense. A social formation can only re-present the inherent flux and difference of its relations by clothing them in a language that hides that fact; a language of ideology.

It should be pointed out that ideology is not a consciously foisted system of illusions. There is no necessarily Machiavellian demon, or masonic bureaucratic sect generating the apparatus of ideology with which to hoodwink the public. However, Althusser clearly has a moral-political purpose. There are various institutions in society that constantly reaffirm and replenish the various ideological practices (Ideological State Apparatuses). Literature and its institutions is one part of that Apparatus for instance.

A crucial function of ideology is its role in constructing people as subjects. Seemingly a strange notion, but one that will become clearer in this section and the one to follow. The statement

again comes from Althusser but it is one that has been taken up and developed by, among others, Kristeva, Lacan and, to some degree, Foucault.

> "I say: the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology, but at the same time and immediately I add that the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology in so far as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects"
>
> (ibid. p.160)

This movement is part of the 'decentering' campaign we have already encountered. That notion that unitary, autonomous, subjectivities exist that are responsible for the generation and comprehension of meanings, is held to be obvious because of a supportive language of ideology. The view is virtually the Holy Spirit of humanist cosmology. It is the taken-for-granted most assuredly taken for granted. So entrenched in our language and thought that its naturalness is all but guaranteed. It is also at the heart of all idealist philosophy of more recent times. The much sought for origin of western metaphysics is invariable 'found' in self-presence, dependent upon this notion of an independent consciousness. It is at this that Derrida tilts his lance.

It is this tradition to which classical realism as a literary form belongs. Those texts relying on a theory of meaning and communication that postulates the transmission of a coherent meaning from one autonomous subjective consciousness to another, create a distinctive position of intelligibility for the reader. The reader is placed as the site of obvious intelligibility; a position created ideologically and supportive and reaffirmative of ideology. The individual consciousness, either author or reader (or the one implying the other) is ideologically seen as the arbiter and guarantor of all meaning. A classic realist text and its institutions of criticism, develop a

practice of reading that positions the author and the reader in just those ways.

Again ideology has a repressive function. It is in the interests of ideology to repress the fact of the role of language in the construction of the subject (the arguments for which are held back until the next section). It must also suppress its own role in the interpellation of the subject. The language of ideology must suppress this power of language and retain the posture of self-sustaining, autonomous individuals. Such a conception is clearly in the interests of the dominant social formation. Where would the American Dream be without it? This ideological function is perhaps most obviously fulfilled in literature. The classic author-text-reader relationship guarantees the ideology of the clear representation of a reality, it also serves to guarantee and reaffirm the position of the reader and the author as autonomous knowing subjects.

Althusser would maintain that it is possible to get outside of that ideological trap. Derrida, at least, seems less sure. One might exercise a choice to adopt a different position vis-a-vis the intelligibility of the text, but that itself would be an ideological choice and would only re-site the reader in a new ideological discourse.

Ideology is enacted in the everyday acts of meaning that people engage in. Ideology, like culture is a semiotic construct. One might propose that there is a dialectical relationship between language - the social structure - and ideology. Ideology is realised in language-use on particular occasions and in particular social contexts and that realisation reaffirms the ideological discourse. A sense of social structure is engendered by a particular, and rhetorically enclosed, form of syntagmatic relations. In a sense, then a particular array of meaning options realises an aspect of the

social system - and ultimately an ideology. It is ideology that makes these realisations appear as right, natural and obvious.

This conception differs, then, from some of the more recent Marxian conceptions of literature, representation and ideology. That view is exemplified in the work of Terry Eagleton (1976). There is proposed in that stream of thought the possibility of the separation of ideology and language. Eagleton seems to suggest the possibility of a language of criticism that is a meta-language over and above an ideological language and able to comment upon it and re-present it. That attempt is in some ways inherent in the whole Marxist doctrine. As Eagleton suggests, criticism must

> "break with its ideological prehistory, situating itself outside the space of the text on the alternative terrain of scientific knowledge"
>
> (p.43)

Such a conception, replaying as it does the old suggestion of metalanguage and the intimations of a more basic structure lying somewhere beyond the surface of normal discourse, is repeatedly countered and denied by Derrida and others of the post-structuralists. Despite efforts to get him to do so (see Derrida's debate with Haudebine and Scarpetta in Derrida 1981), Derrida has not yet attempted a de-construction of the Marxist text but he has indicated his distance from that text and the need to approach it in the same deconstructive manner as any other. The materialist 'science of the text' with its suggestion of the break from ideology cannot really be countenanced by Derrida. All texts, including Marxist texts, and discourse are invariably tropological and to that extent at least, ideological. Even a deconstructive text ultimately relies on an unrecognised rhetoric that creates the possibility of further deconstruction. It is illusory

to speak of a criticism that can operate "outside the space of the text". To hold to the view that deconstruction can be halted by the unearthing of ideology by science is to ignore the rhetorical and ideological nature of the discourse of science itself.

The definitional process, and more specifically the signifying practices, engaged in and enacted in constructing, presenting and seeking to accredit and maintain meaning, is ultimately an ideological process. Especially so to the extent that it embodies an attempt to define and present a meaning from among many possibles: to the extent that it is an attempt to present the order of things.

Different discourse domains are part of our means of classifying and ordering the world, which as Levi-Strauss originally suggested vary from one culture to the next. (His ultimate search for universal structures of classification are perhaps where he departs most notably from the post-structuralists.) Discourse is thereby clearly related to our systems of knowledge, our ways of representing the world to ourselves and others. Particular meaning constructions access, and are reflexively supported by, their positioning in a recognisable discourse domain. The credibility of the construction depends upon this location and the extent to which the discourse is currently held to be a 'knowledgeable' one.

Despite the variability of definition and meaning thesis, it is apparent that certain relations of meaning appear to be regularly articulated and similarly located within an identifiable discourse domain. Since meaning is constructed and not referential, and since meaning is relational, there always exists the possibility of different meanings being developed in relation to the same object or event. In this sense there exists the possibility of a struggle

over meanings and definitions. However, pragmatic experience and the apparent order in society suggests that certain meanings, at least at the level of type, do re-appear. The question then becomes, how is it that certain meanings are able to attain a credibility, a legitimacy, a taken-for-grantedness - a naturalness? This is a question at the heart of this thesis. Part of the answer resides in Foucault's analysis of the movements of inclusion and exclusion - I have already made some assessment of how alternatives initially become untenable, if not unsayable and unthinkable. Alternatives can be cast-off limits, de-legitimised, marginalised, placed in the domain of unreason and so on. But to assess further that practice of exclusion, and the ability of the certain forms of discourse and constructions within discourses to attain dominance and achieve the status of naturalness, rightness and oneness, the notion of ideology is applicable. Ideology is a further movement of closure in this sense.

The construction of a particular meaning depends upon the selection from options and the combination of elements into particular relations.

This may be more or less artful (rhetorical). But as already indicated, a careful construction is no guarantee of the completion of meaning, of its fixity in such a way that its 'reading' is non-problematic. There is some other practice in the process of signification that enables common meanings to be assumed and boundaries to be constructed. Construction alone does not ensure the required closure.

Part of the practice involves the location of the relations of the syntagm within a recognisable set of other relations. But also the 'keying' by the present relations of a particular paradigmatic environment. What is signified, in a sense, is not a referent in

concrete reality, but a position in a recognisable, familiar and previously articulated discourse. Perhaps two concepts are relevant here; that of familiarity and that of value. Present constructions are so put together that they access a familiar discourse; so that it has a position in a familiar discourse. However, at the same time the constructive practice is made in an awareness of the availability of those familiar discourses. Such domains of discourse are also held to be representative of our systems of knowledge. Current constructions need to find a place in patterns of relation that serve to classify and frame experience. Those relations of classification being again essentially relations of difference. Such classification procedures are deemed to have been appropriate to our practical purposes on past occasions - they are seen as intelligible and legitimate ways of ordering our experience and of framing our perceptions. Certain modes of classification; certain discourses come to hold a value at particular times and in particular places. Such value is not an absolute value - it is at least partially a function of the perceived efficacy of the arrangements in handling our daily practical purposes. But further, the value is itself a construction from the mixing and relations of different portions of different discourses. In a sense value is a rhetorical creation. The value of a discourse is in part a function of that rhetorical movement that smoothes out the discourse, that hides its inconsistencies, its paradoxes, its partiality - that gives the appearance of unity and coherence. Certain modes of discourse are made to appear as total, truthful, inviable.

In the structuralist movement these systems of classification themselves took on a virtual universal character from which particular utterances are derived as a series of transformations. Such a movement is eschewed by the post-structuralists, but it does provide

the grounds for a re-definition of ideology away from seeing them as systems of belief, or as in some way in the 'mind' of the speaker coherently:

> "If ideologies are structures ... they they are not 'images' nor 'concepts' (we can say, they are not contents) but are sets of rules which determine an organisation and the functioning of images and concepts ... Ideology is a system of coding reality and not a determined set of coded messages ... in this way, ideology becomes autonomous in relation to the consciousness or intention of its agents: these may be conscious of their points of view about social forms but not of the semantic conditions (rules and categories or codification) which makes possible these points of view."
>
> (Veron 1971 p.68)

From the post-structuralist point of view this is clearly an overly structured view that returns towards the metaphysics of deep structure, but it enables a movement towards a newer conception of ideology. The conception of ideological conceptions having an autonomy from the intending subject is something that will be retained. Individual speakers, whilst being aware of their sayings, need not be attributed with intentionally constructing classifications and orderings that draw upon and reproduce the ideological inventories prevalent in their society. Ideology is not a calculated, strategic enterprise, it has a more taken-for-granted character - that is paradoxically, perhaps, part of its power.

Ideology requires a diachronic perspective at this point. The notion of familiarity cannot be explained without recourse to some conception of the historical elaboration of discourses. Certain discourse modes do re-present themselves, do reappear in their broad features over time. Ways of ordering things in speech are seen to have a perspicacity, to have a reflexive validity with regard to speakers practical conerns. Perhaps more importantly, certain modes of discourse, certain codifications act as a resource for, and

reflexively support the interests of the dominant social formation. For instance, and relevently here, the discourse of representational democracy is reiterated in certain places at certain times. It is taken as an adequate political discourse. Political talk has a sense by virtue of its location in that discourse. Also, the ability to allocate political problematics within that discourse, to dissolve the questionings of political issues within that discourse is a re-affirmation of the veracity and usefulness of the discourse. The discourse attains value and is able to repeat itself. The value is added to by the intermixing of discourses - a rhetorical move that relates the discourse of political democracy with others such as a moral discourse that creates the relation democracy-fairness-goodness. This rhetorical spreading serves to disguise the incompleteness of the discourse of representational democracy. The value is further added to by its relations of difference where representational democracy is contrasted with facism or totalitarianism or monarchy depending on the circumstances. In this way certain discourses, certain relations attain a naturalness - they achieve the virtual status of commonsense (see Gramsci 1971, pp.324-8).

There is a link here, then, to the notion of 'incorrigible propositions' and their embeddedness within a particular episteme, spoken of early. These incorrigible propositions have no base, no final, originating point in an undeniable and universal logic. Their warrant is horizontal rather than vertically located at the bottom of an ever more deep analysis. The search for a warrant entails an ever-circling sidewise shift into adjacent relations. If there is a deep structure, it is not to be conceived of as final, absolute and rigid - it is again relational, dependent upon a productive difference. Its stability is a chimera derived from its taken-

for-granted nature and its embeddedness in the diachronics of historical arrangements. The incorrigible propositions and the episteme are rarely if ever invoked or explicated in talk that endlessly draws upon them. The mundane statements using these resources for that reason have an unchallengeable and obvious status. The warranting endpoint is accepted and taken as given - it remains unprobed. Mundane statements then appear proposition-free; as natural and obvious statements about the order of things.

Everyday statements, then, by their location in discourses that draw upon an uncritically accepted episteme, appear as natural and obvious statements about reality. They signal to the hearer/reader that is how they should be interpreted. They offer a ready-made, simple position of intelligibility. What is intelligible is not a feature of reality apparent somehow behind the words, but the relations keyed by the words within the known discourse. What is acquiesced to is not the reality but the appropriateness of the formulation, the rightness and naturalness of the positioning and the taken-for-granted acceptance of the incorrigibility of the underlying propositions. The talk is adequate - the proposed closure (on the possible realms of knowledge by the interpolation of shared incorrigible propositions) is accepted - the warrant for meaning has a settled, agreed upon and un-probed endpoint. If the discourse of science is founded upon certain, incorrigible propositions then its laws appear always as truth. Any statement which can be relevently and acceptably embedded in the language of science moves towards that status of truth. New, or problematic events are automatically referred to that discourse - it has an ability to provide the answers and its continuing ability to do so reaffirms its power as discourse.

Ideology then, is that practice in language that gives particular constructions their sense of obviousness and naturalness. It is an ideological practice since the naturalness is not founded upon a representation of any ultimate reality but because it is based upon a particular episteme that is warranted by its inter-discursive position. The incorrigible propositions are accepted as the endpoint, as the point of closure and are justified by rhetorical and circulating relations within and between discourses. They represent particular ways of ordering experience. Ways that are supportive of particular interests within the social formation. The ability of those discourses to accommodate problematics and to provide positions of intelligibility is their strength. It provides boundaries and closure. The ability to order reality, to provide credible and legitimised meaning constructions and to create boundaries of exclusion and inclusion is ultimately a political question. The entry of discourse into the struggle for power will be considered more fully in a subsequent section. For now we turn to the second element, that practice that disguises the partiality of discourse, that masks contradiction and the gaps in discourse, that allows the inter-discourse to appear as unified, that provides the ground for naturalness that gives ideology its strength and place; namely rhetoric.

RHETORIC

Introduction

The notion of rhetoric has come to occupy a crucial position in this text. It is a much derided term that, however, has had something of a revival in some circles in recent times. The post-structuralists are happy to use the term, drawing a strength from Nietzsche, and

giving it a crucial role in their enterprise. That enterprise, and other movements that accentuate the centrality of language, have come to attack much of western philosophy at the point where it places pure reason on a pedestal and proposes to discover a pure, self-authenticating truth or method beyond language. The conception of language and meaning favoured by the post-structuralists briefly outlined in earlier passages and in passim, is seen as making that effort a vain one. The 'textual' or 'written' nature of language effectively decentres language and meaning and denies the type of philosophising that relies on a logocentric conception of the source of meaning. It is expressly the contention of Derrida and Barthes that texts and philosophies committed to that tradition are obliged to repress the 'written', and to efface the textual from their own discourse. Deconstruction at its most radically philosophic sets out to reveal that repression and to demonstrate that such texts actually reveal in themselves the efforts of this effacement. They become 'blind' to their own metaphorical underpinning and other purely rhetorical devices that masquerade as reason, as transparent representation of truth and reality. In their attempts to repress, such texts actually reveal their own reliance on the textual and the intertextual. They attempt to isolate and pass on a unitary, guaranteed meaning as natural and obvious; but their actual textual practices undercuts that effort by revealing the entry of rhetoric into their texts which ultimately shows up the plurality and productivity of language and meaning.

At the heart of Derrida's and others exercise is a belief, and a demonstration that modes of, what might be termed, rhetorical analysis, which more recently have only been considered appropriate to literary texts, are wholly apposite for the reading of any form of discourse. For Derrida, philosophy and literature are thereby conflated: the

lauded privilege of philosophical discourse, its claim to be beyond the rhetorical, is subverted. It is true that certain exceptional modern philosophical texts have been self-consciously rhetorical in the desired way, most notably Nietzsche's, but also certain existential texts, and even perhaps Wittgenstein (although the post-structuralists have points of difference with both, especially the former's reliance on intentionality).

The Loss and Return of Rhetoric

Rhetoric as a method and a discipline has itself had a curious and chequered history in the development of western culture. Its sense today, in everyday discourse at least, tends to have a derogatory connotation. It is perceived as a mere artifice of language; a device employed for (usually low) persuasive purposes. The truth of the communication is always held to be something other than the 'frills' provided by any rhetoric that surround it. Indeed there is often the implication that rhetoric can actually be used as an agent of the devil to guise the 'untruth' in slippery language to make it appear as the truth. This derogatory attitude has been in evidence since at least the beginnings of the seventeenth century. This is not, however, the unfortunate position that rhetoric has always occupied, and it is now reappearing from those more distant roots when it had a more central role in theories of knowledge.

The debate about the position of rhetoric has a long history. Its early demise stems perhaps from Plato's scoffing attack on the Stoics and Sophists, notably in 'Gorgias'. In the Socratic dialogues the truth resides in essential, pure forms beyond language; rhetoric is a 'messy' force in language that, if we are not wary, masks and smothers the approach to pure form. From the beginning then, the attack on

rhetoric surrounded itself with, what ultimately was, a moral force. Part of Aristotle's contribution to the debate was to point out that it was not language that could have evil intent, only people. The rhetorical is a natural feature of language - it is beyond such moral attribution.

In the more recent past, classical study relied heavily on rhetoric: there was no fundamental distinction between rhetoric and dialectic, epistemologically. With the split, when it came, developed the distinction that has traced its way through the history of thought, with some interruptions, between words and things, between language and reality, between truth and language, between substance and language.

Rhetoric took its most unfortunate turn when it was taken out of language and placed in the author-orator. Rhetoric became, not a natural and inevitable attribute of language, but a deceitful, intentional act on the part of the author-orator. Rhetoric, one might say, was denatured, deprived of its force by coming to be seen as merely a collection of devices marshalled and inscribed in the discourse by the speaker. The onset of the modern scientific discourse, of course, hurried in the further demise of rhetoric. Facts and ideas, objectively demonstrable, became the ground of knowledge. Firm truths that could be, and should be, grasped and delivered in a spartan language devoid of menacing ornamentation. With John Locke, for instance, is the beginning of that train of thought that sees language as a simple medium of communication in which it acts as an accurate representation of reality that is transmitted, untrammeled by the vaguries of language, from an emitting subject to a receptive other, where the message of the communication is immediately grasped in its unitary, original, intended form. All figural language, with its ambiguities and immoral distortions, is a threat to that process. It might be noted in this regard that the

aspired-to values of clarity and order are themselves rhetorical aims and accomplishments, often considered as major elements of rhetorical style. It is also, incidentally, rather peculiar that whilst that movement was taking place, poetry, eminently figural, continued to be valued highly, and was itself held to offer the possibility of delivering 'truth' to the reader. But, of course, by now poetics had become something wholly other from the discourses of philosophy and science. Its status in western epistemology was, and continues to be, enigmatic - a sentimental vestige, perhaps, of past ways of knowing.

Even that conception of rhetoric as a series of sophisticated linguistic devices whose mastery entails considerable persuasive force, has been devalued and largely forgotten. The elaborate systems and styles of rhetoric and their manifold forms and devices as developed by, say, Aristotle or Cicero have largely slipped out of academic and other discourses - replaced by a rather crass commonsense approach to oratory - 'how to make friends and influence people'.

That there is a resurgence of rhetoric as a respectable field of study, and that acknowledges its more positive and natural position, is, in part, evidenced by its reappearance on the curriculum of American Universities. Also psychological studies of the variables affecting effective communication have tangentally drawn attention to certain factors that in the past might have been considered under the rubric of 'rhetoric'. This quite apart from what I see as its more significant re-emergence in the post-structuralist deliberations that have been of concern in this text.

In modern times it is perhaps the work of I.A. Richards in "Philosophy of Rhetoric" (1936) that has had the most impact. There is much in Richards that finds an echo in some of the modern notions of language and meaning that have already received attention here. Like,

say, Wittgenstein, he rejects what he refers to as the 'Proper Meaning Superstition': the belief that a word can be said to be a proper meaning existing in abstraction independently of the actual uses of the word (pp. 11-12). For Richards, the study of rhetoric (and metaphor) is reconstituted to become the encompassing 'study of verbal understanding and misunderstanding' (p.23). He, at least partially, re-naturalises rhetoric, seeing metaphor and ambiguity not as ghastly ornaments of language, but as its natural properties. However, he does seem to retain an adherence to the view that rhetoric serves the communicational purposes of the author; writing being a kind of transaction between author and reader(s).

There is another anti-Derridean notion implicit in Richards. Like the philosopher Croce, Richards seems to believe that we must be aware of rhetoric, of what it does, and that it is controllable. Some of the references in his work allude to a 'science' or metalanguage beyond the realms of the figural, by which the figural can be apprehended and understood and commented upon in non-figural ways. He implicitly re-establishes the divisions of reason and language that the post-structuralists want to question. For Derrida and others such distinctions are based on false assumptions, metaphysically and ideologically oriented, which deny the character of language as a ceaseless 'play'. Thus, even in Saussure and Levi-Strauss, Derrida 'discovers' such divisions; a structured and ordering metalanguage of formal structure that is supposed ultimately to afford protection from the disturbing qualities of language as textuality, intertextuality and as difference.

Derrida isolates two 'interpretations of interpretation', whose difference it is vital to recognise, and that are absolutely irreconcilable.

> "The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth of origin which escapes play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, ... throughout his entire history ... has dreamed of full presence, the reassuring foundation, the origin and the end of play."
>
> (Derrida. 1978. p.292)

It is Derrida's contention that structure (in this formal conception), with its supposed stabilising centre, recurs constantly throughout the history of western thought. It reappears again and again, under different guises, forever promising the possibility of a full presence where meaning can be immediately and unfalteringly grasped as complete, absolute and final. The ogres of structure, centre and presence lull us with the promise of certitude and order whilst suppressing the play and freedom of language. These guises of structure and centre as they are seen recurring through history, are what Derrida seeks to expose. "The history of metaphysics...is the history of these <u>metaphors</u> and <u>metonymies</u>" (Derrida 1978. p.279. my emphasis) He takes us to the point where structure is not conceived of as having a centre that organises and guarantees

> "...the moment when, in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse...a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain of the play of signification infinitely."
>
> (ibid. p.280)

Derrida explicitly cites Nietzsche for some foundational attacks on the rhetorical nature of metaphysics, and the decentreing strategy that Derrida develops. Nietzsche, too, cites the Socratic dialogues as the point in western metaphysics of the expulsion of rhetoric, replaced by a presumed dialectics where reason confronts itself untroubled by

language. Anyone who has read Plato's "Gorgias", however, cannot fail to be struck by its own rhetorical force, even on a commonsense valuation. Reason slides into, and is seen to reside upon, rhetoric, even here. Again there is no reflexive awareness of the text's own rhetorical nature. The careful alignment of truth and wisdom with the Socratic mode of inquiry makes its language appear natural. The rhetorical, the textual, is effaced and the discourse is made to appear as the straightforward delivery of reason bolstered by pretensions to unchallengeable and universal logic.

Derrida is not slow to draw our attention to Plato's predeliction for dialogue. It reflects another point in which 'writing' is devalued. Plato, like many who follow, suppresses writing, has a fear of writing and its potentiality. He again gives primacy to speech, with its allusions to self-presence. Writing and rhetoric are unfortunate supplements to an approach to pure form. Nietzsche soberingly points out that even as a matter of historical fact, rhetoric preceded dialectics. He goes so far as to suggest that dialectics is born out of, and ultimately relies on the rhetorical and metaphorical. The figures of reason, of logic, of dialectic have become so entrenched in our language and thinking that it is an effort to think of them as anything other than primal and natural. It is just this that Nietzsche accuses philosophy of perpetually neglecting. Its programme undoes itself by its failure to be reflexive about its own position as discourses that are textual and rhetorical. Any philosophy that remains unaware of the means by which it constructs itself in language is blind to the resources of its own pronouncements. (As is a sociology that is unreflexive of its use of everyday language as a resource (see Garfinkel 1967 and Sacks 1963)) Nietzsche <u>is</u> self-consciously rhetorical, he remains painfully (insanely?) aware that language always performs persuasively and

figurally, and that this feature invades philosophical discourse as it does any other. As soon as philosophy faces its own place in language, the nature of the game must change.

In Foucault too we find similar 'discoveries'. He also claims that discourse (including textuality and 'writing') has become 'invisible', that it has remained unaware of its own nature and continues to masquerade as something of clarity and transparency. In addition, he maintains, its crucial involvement in the will to power has been similarly effaced. Discourse disappeared for a reason. For Foucault it did so, not so much the better to support a metaphysics of presence as Derrida suggests, but rather for more political reasons. Discourse is made invisible so that its involvement in the struggles of power can be more subtle and insiduous. Its effectiveness in the political sphere is magnified, indeed consists in, its very invisibility. Each of the realms of discourse that Foucault has considered; those of penology, psychiatry, criticism and history, is inevitably rhetorical, masking its own nature as discourse, but they are also languages of control - of exclusion and inclusion - connected to its own cultural and institutional realm. What is hidden is the rhetorical nature of the discourse and its ineluctable connectedness to these other mechanisms of control. They parade as natural discourse that speak clearly of reality and truth. They speak of real events and states of affairs that lie beyond language. There is no suggestion of an ideologically derived discourse that supports and is supported by the dominant social formation. The expulsion of rhetoric to the regions of the discredited can be seen as politically expedient. Consider if rhetoric continued to constitute a core module of education. One might suppose that the populace could be armed with a potentially powerful analytic tool. A critical tool that could be employed to deconstruct the discourses of power and the supporting institutions that seek to control and subjugate them.

The Centrality of Rhetoric

Foucault's own discourses are themselves characterised by an overt rhetoricism. The major trope employed by him is perhaps catachresis (a deliberate misuse (sic) or misapplication of a word, especially by a mixing of metaphors). This is significant at a number of levels. Firstly, Foucault talks across the boundaries of disciplinary discourse. In that sense he misapplies a language of, say, history, in a discourse that is apparently philosophical, and so on. The ploy is, of course, deliberate. He ironically plays these games of discourse boundedness revealing their shallowness and at the same time making a point about intertextuality. Secondly, traditionally catachresis has operated on the presupposition that there is a clear distinction between the literal and the figural meanings of words - that is it concurs with the Proper Meaning Superstition. By making all his discourse catachretic, Foucault, like Richards, shows his displeasure, teasingly, at the distinction. Since all words engage in the play of differences, and in view of the break of the signifier from the fixed signified, then the possibility of a solely literal meaning dissipates. Remember, the relation signifier-signified is not natural but arbitrary, or perhaps conventional: in a sense then, all verbal constructions edge toward the catachretic. Indeed in "The Order of Things" he explicitly posits that the relationships of intelligibility, relating sign to the element they are said to signify, are all rhetorical; being synecdoche, metonymy and catachresis '(or metaphor if the analogy is less immediately perceptible)' (Foucault 1966:1974). For Foucault the irredeemable Difference of phenomenological experience, is constrained in language by categories of Sameness; this 'abuse' being an unavoidable function of language, but that which ensures that all language is catachretic essentially. This feature too is repressed by the Proper Meaning Superstition intervening and by the boast of literal meaning.

It is catachresis that is made to appear unnatural - reduced to the 'mere' tropological and thus forbidden and excluded from representing the truth directly.

All discourse, on Foucault's view, unfolds in one of the four tropological spaces mentioned above, that establish the nature of the relationship of things to worlds. The dominant trope of a particular discourse thus constantly mediates the ways of knowing treated by that discourse. Thus Foucault takes the rhetorical right back to the centre of language and meaning: knowledge is tropologically determined.

The deconstructivist aims to pursue the figural in all texts to demonstrate the reliance of discourse (all) on the rhetorical tropes of language. Generally it is held that a point is reached at which the espoused logic of the text is undone by its contradictions embodied in its figural forms - or the clash between its assertions of literality and its revealed reliance on the rhetorical. Thus in the case of even Saussurean discourse that suppresses writing, its full exploration yields up that point where its own textual ramifications subvert the espoused logic that is holding writing in a subjugated state. A deconstructive analysis is said to explore the very textuality of the text until a point is reached where it transgresses its own project - its espoused 'reality' is revealed in its own language (as text) to be rhetorical.

The very nature of language as a plurality, a play, and as an intertext, results, inevitably in the possibility of multiple meanings. This almost assuredly means that any attempt to suppress the textual, the plural, or the intertextual is doomed to contradict itself. Foucault might say it is doomed to tension and contradiction since language itself also halts the flux of things, the run of experience, and reconstitutes it as sameness.

A text that aspires to close off meaning, to present coherence, unity and self-presence will ultimately contradict itself because of the play of the textual. There will be an exposure of its own gaps, incoherences and contradictions. It is asserted that there will always fundamentally be a gap between the public, conscious project of the text and a contrary textuality always threatening it. The gap between the project, say the presentation of a coherent set of meanings that are enclosed, in relation to participation, and the actual text of participation, is a function of the inescapably textual nature of the language that presents the project. Its play of signifiers that 'spreads' the espoused project beyond its supposed limits and even begins to show up relations within it that are contradictory, or at least potentially so.

Derrida, in his deconstructive treatment of Rousseau, Saussure, Husserl and Levi-Strauss, shows how something is always repressed in relation to something else - writing by speech; culture by nature; indicative-expressive signs; signifier by signified - but also how this priority is only maintained by the force of a dominant metaphor , and not by the power of a supposed pure reason, logic or natural truth. Usually that metaphor is related to notions of a presence, an immediate, self-authenticating self-presence - a logocentrism that is a substitute for a relationship of differences (he points out simply here that the relation of difference - absence-presence - must always be prior to an assertion of presence). They are the metaphors of metaphysics; voice, origin, transcendent ego; or the metaphors of formal structure with its static and stabilising spatio-temporal connotations. In a sense then, deconstruction attacks the espoused 'reason' of these texts, showing that all the time they depend upon another repressed or unacknowledged level of meaning.

The metaphoric becomes primary. In the long-standing distinction between the literal and figural meaning, the illusion is the primacy of the literal and the failure to recognise its dependence on the metaphorical. Difference, from which metaphor derives its force, is always prior, and in fact constitutive of any literal meaning. It is not then, "a matter of inverting the literal meaning and the figurative meaning, but of determining the 'literal' meaning of writing as metaphoricity itself." (Derrida 1977 p.15)

In his essay "From Restricted to General Economy" and elsewhere, Derrida seems to be in agreement with Nietzsche in even questioning the foundational logic of philosophical practice. What Nietzsche had done, and with which Derrida seems to concur, was to suggest that even our formal logic in fact represses its roots. Logic too founded itself upon some basic metaphors. Logic cannot govern the meaning of an interpretation for logic is an interpretation itself. It is an interpretation of a conceptualisation said to be constituted on a knowledge of things derived directly from our self-present experience of what it is to perceive them. Thus, there is a presupposed link between empirical self-evidence and conceptual truth. Nietzsche finds that link to be non-natural and unobvious, but is made to appear so by a recurring tropological practice that raises the contingent to the status of the necessary.

Formal logic is built upon 'first principles', points of thought beyond which it is supposed we cannot go. The language here is already of that kind that Derrida would castigate as a metaphysical search for origin. The mode of knowing of these first principles cannot be further demonstrated, the implication is that they are somehow immediately and unquestionably available to a self-reflecting consciousness. They are only in fact, demonstable tautologously by a supposedly apodeitic

syllogism. Rhetoric then, is taken to be a socially oriented form of reasoning, does not deal in 'first principles', it cannot enter into syllogistic demonstration. Its premises are always 'open for discussion', or, more pertinently, are not related vertically down to an originary principle, but horizontally in syntagmatic relations.

Traditionally, rhetoric dealt in enthymemes; that is syllogisms that develop from probable premises in ways said to be aimed at persuading; or emotionally and pragmatically, rather than logically, influencing the hearer. More recently, the apodeitic form has been considered only appropriate to reified axiomatical systems such as, say, formal geometry. Thus all other types of discourse, including philosophy and sociology, are now included under the rhetorical. Perelman (1969) here suggests that beyond these axiomatic discourses, all human interaction must be considered in the rhetorical mode, a mode not reducible to any purely logical form.

The Masks of Rhetoric

In the rhetorical mode, then, there is no ultimate point of reference, except those constituted in convention and ideology: the premises are only probable. There may be pretension to first principles, the rhetorical may aspire to establish its argument as natural and logically infallible, but that is based on a language of ideology that gives the impression of naturalness and which determines the back point of the epistemology to which discourse is held as needing to refer to. Any text aspiring in this fashion to axiomatic status, or by appeal to a (first principle) metalanguage, will always produce within itself a paradox that exposes it as 'merely' rhetorical and show its disguise as apodeitic discourse. It is this paradox in the text that deconstruction seeks out in order to expose that pretention and to undercut

the referential or realist guise. These guises, of various kinds, are that which operates to hold meaning, to foster a sense of one meaning, to control language. In exposing them Derrida hopes to release and 'desediment' meaning; to free the natural plurality of language whilst at the same time dispensing with the crippling metaphysical distinctions of western philosophy. As E.W. Said puts it:

> "What each of Derrida's works tries to do is to reveal the entamé - the tear, or perhaps the incision - in every one of the solid structures put up by philosophy, an entamé already inscribed in written language itself by its persistent desire to point outside itself, to declare itself incomplete and unfit without presence and voice."
>
> (1979. p.697)

This entamé, this paradox, in the texts he considers is what releases themes that are at odds with the espoused themes of the text.

Derrida is following a Heideggerian lead when he maintains that the history of western thought is constituted (with a few exceptions) of a debate that circles and recircles around recurring concepts in an oppositional frame: a circle that limits itself and thus can be made to appear finite and displayable. The texts Derrida attacks, although they themselves push hard and are critical of that tradition, are still to be found (albeit in less obvious ways) repeating the moves around that circle - but tend to disguise the fact that they are. The deconstructive method (sic) aims to penetrate that disguise, to initially reverse the oppositions that underpin it but then to transform the discourse from the inside by interpolating his anti-concepts: by showing the undecidability of the text. The paradox that allows him his point of entry is engendered by the fundamental metaphoricity of language trying to masquerade as pure rational discourse; transcendent of the figural. As Norris, C. (1980 p.59) has it:

> "Whatever is written partakes of textuality, and covers its rhetorical tracks only by an effort (more or less naive or knowing) to efface its signature as writing and pretend to be a purely truth telling or communicative function" ....."The subject is radically 'decentred' in relation to language, just as language loses its referential grip on a world whose reality is inscribed in a network of textual codes and conventions. Derrida's 'grammatology' is the business of unravelling this figurative discourse, showing up the efforts of language to conceal its radically autonomous 'freeplay' and thus unhinging the covert metaphysics which assumes a stable relation between knower and known."

In any kind of discourse then, one can look for a point of deconstructive entry, that point in which the text engenders its own paradox. This point is sometimes referred to as an 'aporia'. It is already inscribed in the text but it requires an interrogation, or a deconstructive activity to 'desediment' it. An aporia is a kind of stuttering in the text, a point where the train of thought encounters defeating obstacles and the discourse loses confidence in itself, and looks for help outside. Commonly it is covered up by rhetorical moves that recycle the argument tautologously, or, as already hinted, revert to habitual styles of discourse inhabited by the common metaphysical, oppositional language that supports a common and particular episteme. The etymology of aporia is from the Greek meaning 'unpassable path'. For Derrida it marks that point in a text when the supposed logical/rational argument reaches a paradox because of its failure to be reflexive about its own textual-rhetorical nature.

The natural figural play of language means that a text ultimately fails to efface that which it seeks to mask. In one sense it fails to hide its own textual-rhetorical base. At a more substantive level, but by reason of the first, it cannot continue to repress that which it aims to repress. A close 'reading' of a discourse attacking its main turns of argument, shows how the tropological force of language disrupts the logic of its own supposed ground. The two faces of rhetoric are its use

and capacity to mask a false logic and to make the arbitrary seem natural and truthful; and its capacity to offer, at the same time, the possibility and the point at which the task fails in its overt task. Rhetoric is both the mask, the means for self-effacement; and the means of debagging. Derrida and his followers maintain that philosophy continues to circle in the metaphysical-oppositional mode because of its continued failure to be self-reflexive about its own constitution in textual and rhetorical terms.

One cautionary note here. Derrida and other (although not all) deconstructivists, are well aware of this reflexive injunction. No commentary on philosophy, on the metaphysical can hope to fully transcend it; it can only attack those modes of discourse from within. To tackle anything there must be a point of engagement. Deconstructivism, then, must be aware of its own rhetorical and textual constitution. Each deconstructive act and text will itself be open to deconstruction. A deconstructive text will not avoid being persuasive (else it would fail really to speak at all), at that point it ceases to be sceptical about itself and will again re-enter discourse as visibly naive, ripe again to be unpacked and reconstituted. The worrying thing for some people is that this appears as a reckless regress in which nothing engages beyond the textual. De Man in some ways makes a bridge here between Foucault and Derrida when he suggests that a deconstruction at some point must act performatively (not in the sense of an author's intended persuasion). It is in the act of performing, or rather <u>what</u> it performs, that takes it beyond the sceptical regress. And a text <u>will</u> perform, as soon as it enters the public domain it will act and in so doing, immediately pass the stage of its own self-doubt.

Burke and Mills - rhetoric and vocabularies of motive

Before proceeding, I would just like to note that had the points been switched earlier, a different but complementary track could have been followed. A track that begins with the work of K. Burke and takes in C. Wright Mills' conception of 'vocabularies of motive' (C. Wright Mills 1940), that passes through the terrain of that social psychological/sociological discourse that focusses upon 'accounts' as the crucial ground for understanding social action (see Lyman & Scott, 1970 and 1968, R. Harre, 1979 & 1972 and based upon Austin, S.L. 1961) and that terminates (perhaps) in Blum A.F. and P. McHugh's "The Social Ascription of Motives" (1971)

I do not intend to pursue that track in any detail here, merely to signify its adjacency to the concerns already expressed, and to indicate some points of correlation. There is, of course, not a complete overlapping, some of the pursuances of that stream of discourse are ultimately at odds to the one so far presented. Which is why it is here as a supplement and not instead of. Its presence here at all perhaps serves most usefully to display the partiality and degree of arbitrariness of the construction of this (and any text) and of the chanciness of the intertextual.

At the briefest K. Burke defines rhetoric as the verbalisation of motives (see D. Gowler and K. Legge 1980) - or at least that is the strand of thought that has been taken up by subsequent writers from within sociology; it is only a partial representation of his position. Both Burke and Mills participate in the movement that reconceives motive as a linguistic manifestation rather than any internalised state or drive.

As Overington (1977) characterises it, Burke has a threefold concern with rhetoric; the language of motives, motives in language

and language as motive. It is the former two that are embodied in Mills treatment (Mills explicitly acknowledges his debt to Burke's "Permanence and Change" 1935). The concern here is to conceive of motive in terms of the accounts ('rationalisations' and/or 'justifications') persons provide for their actions. Both Mills, and Burke in his early work establish the link between 'vocabularies of motive' to divisions in society and to particular socio-historical arrangements. That is they both seek to describe the differing motivational rhetoric present in, and supportive of, varying economic and political orders. They also recognise that in that sense rhetoric is, as Gowler and Legge (1980) put it, "placed squarely in that class of behaviours labelled 'political'" (p.3). Vocabularies of motive are distributed unevenly in society such that different interest groups have access to and are able to utilize differently and with varying degrees of legitimacy and effectiveness (a point associated with my notion of definitional vacuums and the availability of alternatives).

But Burke goes further with 'motives as language' where "words quo words ... because of the connotations which hold clusters of terms together, can become justifications for action." (Overington 1977 p.134). Signifers, at least, are in relation regardless of the relations or otherwise of things in the real world. Some connotational relations are so pervasive and repetitive that they form for Burke a more or less cohesive structuring. The presence of one item from the 'cluster' is sufficient to 'key off' others in such a way that the articulation of that one word is likely to initiate action that, in a sense, is a search for the other items. Overington gives an example:

> "to call some occurrence of death 'murder' is to justify (explain, motivate) the search for an individual who intended to 'kill' ... No matter what took place at the scene of the crime, calling the situation 'murder' ... brings into play

> the terminological relations which inhere in the meaning of these words" (Overington 1977 p.134) (Note the use of 'play' in this context).

The use of one term, the labelling of one event or object, because of that word's connotational relations leads to connection with other events, states or objects (that have their own linguistic equivalent). The language use itself operates as the motive for action.

The point of difference with the post-structuralists here is a certain ambiguity in Burke's own thesis. Whether he is actually concerned with focussing upon "terms about action or to action itself" (Overington 1977 p.133). Burke appears to want to link the use of terms and their connotational relations to actual events and real objects as if that distinction can be clearly made.

Burke's "Grammar of Motives" (1969) rather like Foucault's "archaelogical" investigations into the 'order of things' is concerned with the structuring (the grammar) of order. The 'rhetorics of motive' constitute a grammar by which the sense of order is achieved. Burke is concerned to dismantle the grounds for that order and show how it is actually composed of a variety of interested perspectives each with a partial epistemology and its own rhetoric of motives, that offers coherence and unity. His attempt is to describe those rhetorics and expose the interests they represent and to delve into the grammar of rhetorics to display the multiplicity of perspectives and vocabularies.

But he has a further aim that is more ambitious and contentious. He is searching for the essentials of human action and order. He clearly holds the view that there is a better way of expressing the way things are, the order of things, than in those partial ways represented by the rhetorics he describes. His method of striving for that is dialectical, an approach toward essentials via contradiction. He seeks to expose the variety of perspectives that are held epistemologically in relation to the order of things. His analysis puts those

contradictory perspectives together in ironic juxtaposition. The result is a finer illumination of the essential nature of social order - not least of the partiality of each perspective and the ultimate reliance of one upon the other. As C. Morris (1969) puts it in reviewing 'A Grammer of Motives' where he describes Burke's style as a:

> "a dramatic dialectic in which philosophers, political theorists, economists, poets, theologians, and psychologists all have their say, and each mode of saying is shown to need correction by each other mode. The book is experienced as a vast dialogue" (p164)

It is simply the playing back of those varying discursive domains, but now in the same space and not in isolated protection, juxtaposed and haggling for the right to speak authoritatively, that is the essence of the dialectic. There is no synthesis attempted or possible:

> "There is no question of a synthesis as the culmination of the dialectic; there is no single authoritative perspective; it is only the multiplicity of elements in the dialectic which offers an accurate account."

Burke seems to see the variety of epistemological perspectives as a necessary reality of organised society. It is perhaps the only means by which modern societies can maintain a sense of order. Thus far Burke is almost Nietzschean in his disrespect for particular discourses and his method is not unlike Foucault's - the notion of connotational 'clusters', the dismantling of the rhetorics of motive by ironic juxtaposition are at least similar strategies to those employed by Foucault. Furthermore, the method of "perspective by incongruity" (Burke 1965 and 1959) has much in common with Foucault's teasing replaying of regions of discourse, his method of inverting relations and achieving a transformation. Where they differ is perhaps at the point where Foucault asserts that all discourses are

rhetorical and are warranted in a circular, self-and-cross-referencing fashion - there is no founding ontological base, no primary and originating epistemology - whereas Burke seems to want to suggest that the dialectic of opposing discourses somehow reveals something more; that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, that the essentials of order are more closely approximated via the dialectic. Foucault might criticise Burke for implying that the babble of discourses is leading somewhere - towards a closer revelation of truth. But he might criticise Foucault (or perhaps more pertinently Derrida) for implying that discourses do not lead anywhere!

The 'perspective by incongruity' (which incidentally is also a device employed stylistically by E. Goffman throughout his work) is itself self-consciously rhetorical in nature. It is an attempt to threaten the imposed closure of particular relations and clusters - to subvert their taken-for-granted nature. But he describes the method himself thus:

> "Perspective by incongruity (is) a method for gauging situations by verbal atom cracking. That is, a word belongs by custom to a certain category - and by rational planning you wrench it loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category."
>
> (Burke 1965 p.liv-lv)

This compares with Foucault's emphasis on catechresis.

Other points of coincidence:

(i) 'Spinning" - Burke requires a method for focussing on salient terms within discourse and a starting point in the clusters from which to explore the relations and to interpolate the perspective by incongruity. His explication of that method is not clear but Overington provides the following quote:

> "look for moments at which in your opinion, the work comes to fruition. Imbue yourself with the terminology of these moments. And spin from them." (Burke 1964 p.167)

There is a similarity between 'spin' and the urging to explore the 'play' of language by the post-structuralists.

(ii) Emphasis on synedoche - part of the ground for the method of 'spinning' is derived from a consideration of relations in the cluster as synecdochic.

> "We consider synecdoche to be the basic process of representation, as approached from the standpoint of 'equations' or 'clusters' of what goes with what."

I simply wish to note here a corresponding primacy of position accorded to synecdoche Foucault as the principle form of tropological relation. For Burke the relations between motivational terms and within the clusters are essentially rhetorical relations.

(iii) Plausibility - the choice of item, the analysis of clusters receives its final warrant from its plausibility for an audience. This is the only criteria of legitimacy or rightness of interpretation. Certainly one metaphorical analysis is likely to strike a chord with one audience rather than another. But the original text remains - available for countermanding interpretations. This is true for Foucault too and moves towards that point where all texts, including deconstructive texts are available for deconstruction.

The work of Mills is perhaps better known in sociological and social-psychological literature so perhaps does not require much comment here. A quote from Mills' important paper will sound loud echoes immediately:

> "The quest for 'real motives' suppositiously set over against 'mere rationalisations' is often informed by a metaphysical view that the 'real' motives are in some way biological. Accompanying such quests for something more real and back of rationalisation is the view held by many sociologists that language is an external manifestation or concomitant of something prior, more genuine, and 'deep in the individual'."
>
> (Mills 1940 p.908)

The similarities between the stream of argument indexed here and that embodied in the post-structuralist discourse are quite startling.

Mills argues that it is pointless to attempt to infer psychological states from lingual phenomena. But he goes further in suggesting that in relation to motivation at least there <u>is</u> nothing beyond our verbalisations. The important point then is that the particular verbalised item (motive) does not lead to an inference of something in the individual but "as a basis of inference for a typical vocabulary of motives of a situated action" (Mills 1940 p.910). There are, then, a <u>typical</u> set of verbalisations that tend, over time, to come to accompany actions occurring in specific situations. Mills was concerned, like the early Burke, to relate these typical vocabularies to particular interest groups in society particularly those of the dominant social formation. Vocabularies are unevenly distributed in society. Furthermore, they are used to characterise order and the real, and thus engage again in movements of exclusion and inclusion. Certain motives are held as illegitimate, even mad. So Mills too is concerned with the motivational rhetoric of different interest groups in society.

Burke's analysis and awareness of rhetorical impact is certainly more refined and Mills has been castigated as ultimately engaging in 'psychological regression' (see Taylor, L. 1979). Burke, like Foucault, draws attention to the part rhetoric plays in actually effacing motive - or of making the discourse appear as if it operates from only one obvious element or cluster of motivation. Certain forms of talk present themselves as neutral, as without motivational or evaluative force. It again operates as a point of closure where the connotations of motivational vocabularies are denied. Discourses are neutral and objective - ideologically free. As Taylor (1979) points out, the discourses that describe themselves as 'official' or 'business', 'technical', 'judicious' or 'bureaucratic' are of this type. One might add that the language of science also aspires to this status. Business, reports, legal documents, scientific papers - are presented as non-motivational, non-persuasive - non-rhetorical. They speak for and of themselves. In Foucault's terms they efface their 'will to power'.

Pat Carlen (1976) 'Magistrates Justice' already referred to, and her work with Burton (Burton and Carlen 1977) explicitly deal with that form and feature of discourse. They decompose the neutrality and reveal its rhetorical and ideological nature. Such discourses do not invite an interrogative response - they speak clearly and cleanly and demand a passivity from the receiver. As Burton and Carlen put it in relation to the Official discourse of the judicial process:

> "The main problem for Official Discourses on law and order is that all problems have to be discussed in terms of an ideal of distributive justice which cannot admit to the material conditions which render that ideal impossible. A discourse has to be developed which will both pre-empt and foreclose any theory within which questions could be posed which might destroy the pre-givens of that discourse."
>
> (Burton & Carlen 1977 p.385)

Their task is that various rhetorical strategies are employed to efface certain possible motivational accounts and to give the appearance of a neutral and natural discourse that offers, not an explicit and ideologically linked vocabulary of motive, but a justification in terms of 'commonsense', 'the natural order of things', a 'taken-for-grantedness', and so on. Official Discourse is a discourse that seeks to provide closure, to provide obvious positions of intelligibility, that seeks to exclude, that seeks to efface its true rhetorical and motivational nature, that seeks to deny its status as ideology and its will to power.

The stream of thought outlined above clearly has an affinity with the post-structuralist enterprise that is most manifest in what has preceded. There are differences, but why not be positive at this point and take the similarities. Even if the connection remains at a simple level, I want to suggest that the consideration of textures considered next bears some resemblance to Burke's 'connotational clusters'; could, with some leeway be conceived of as 'vocabularies of motive', and are instances perhaps of Official Discourse's attempts at closure and a masking of rhetorical, motivational and ideological implications, and a movement to present themselves as natural and obvious.

TEXTURES

Introduction

There is a recurrent dynamic in the text of participation between the entry of, and seeming usefulness of the term 'participa-

tion' and its full strangeness, newness and potential disruptiveness (witness the initial avoidance of the term in the early discourse of management). That dynamic creates a tension that engenders a movement to recuperate the term to habitual and familiar discourse(s). There are numerous points in the text where participation is returned to domains of discursive familiarity - movements that operate an attempted closure; that work an exclusive-inclusive practice; that seek to deny alternative, potentially interrogative, even radical, interpretations; that posit the espoused presentations, definitions and relations as natural, obvious and right. It is an essentially ideological movement that retrieves participation for the dominant social formation - for established and accredited ways of ordering things.

Ideology serves to disguise the limits of particular regions of discourse. The inevitable and necessary partiality of discourse, and its inconsistencies and incoherences are circumvented by an ideological practice that establishes traditional and/or legitimised points of adequate finiteness and re-circulates the language tautologously back into the domain of the discourse. Ideology might be said to disguise what have previously been referred to as aporia in the text. It makes those arbitrary points of finiteness, those stops to productivity in the text that are accepted as the extent of the search for a warrant and guarantee for the meaning-origin of the text, seem as natural end-points in the discourse.

The definitions offered by management at Tridy will aspire to a naturalness - will present themselves as the 'right' and appropriate definitions (as will other groups attempted definitions). The texture(s) of meaning constructed by the given (and paradigmatic relations) will be supposed to adequately map out the boundaries of the term, to stand as an ordered, complete, cohesive and final coverage of the possible meanings of participation in that context. It presents itself as an inter-

pretation devoid of muddling inconsistencies, gaps and contradictions. It must appear as such if it is to completely fill the space it has created in the discourse of the shop-floor. Any omissions or contradictions - any free-play allowed to remain - if spotted are in danger of being exploited and widened and used to introduce other, unwanted and unplanned interpretations that could disrupt the aspired-to definition. The text will try to convey to the audience a natural, obvious and transparent 'message' with which they can readily concur and accept as 'right' and 'correct'. It is the task of the style of presentation and the employed rhetoric to achieve that. The texture(s) attempt to transparently convey to the audience (the shop-floor membership) an obvious relationship to features in the supposed reality of company affairs and activities.

That task is at least partially aided by the management presentations and talk being, by fiat, part of an Official Discourse (official in the obvious sense and in the sense implied by Burton and Carlen 1977). 'Company' discourse, as a version of 'business' discourse, say, aspires to a status of neutrality - a right and objective way of speaking about and ordering things within the context of the company. Participation is located within that discourse and accrues the concomitant benefits.

The effort is further assisted by the fact that the term 'participation' has the advantage of already occupying a place in everyday (if that expression has any sense) discourse, albeit in a different form. To this extent it already has some sense of naturalness. One might anticipate that the attempted introduction of a more alien term, perhaps one related to the more esoteric world of computer technology, might pose greater difficulties. A further means of the conveyance of a simple untrammelled message concerns how the text positions the audience: but I am jumping ahead here.

The achievement of naturalness is at least in part accomplished by making, what are really only arbitrary relations appear as if they are innocent and necessary. The development of the relationships that compose the textures of meaning emerging around participation are essentially arbitrary relations 'constructed' in the talk and interactions of management (or else intertextually reflect a similar arbitrariness elsewhere). The success of the rhetoric of this definitional imperialism depends on its ability to make those arbitrary relations appear as natural to the shop-floor such that they can do nothing but nod in agreement to the sense, the appalling obvious sense, of what is being said. Thus when the presented definitions of management forge the relationship between, say, 'participation' and 'communication' arbitrarily from amongst all the myriad possible associations that could have been made, it is the task of rhetoric to make that relationship appear to the audience as wholly natural and right.

It should be said that the assumed source of the text, itself contributes to the achievement of naturalness. But more important would be a matching of the adopted rhetoric with the background expectancies of the intended audience and a locating of the relationships within an ideological discourse that is shared by the audience. Again, 'participation' is singular in this regard. Once the association is formed between 'participation' and (industrial) democracy, the way is opened up for a tapping of the ideological discourse that surrounds that notion; one that is assuredly shared and familiar to all members at Tridy. This displays the interrelated feature of discourses. One might analytically isolate an academic discourse that talks discreetly about industrial democracy, but the notion of democracy also offers a point of entry into an overtly, but still isolatable, political discourse and also into a much wider everyday discourse (or non-specialised, commonsense discourse). Embodied in such an ideological

discourse are arrangements for shared values. On this view, ideology is not something other than the discourse, not some rarified confection of beliefs and opinions, but is a more or less established and commonly shared set of interrelationships that provides a distinctive texture of meaning around value and belief items. An ideological discourse might be said to be just that established and shared chain of signifiers where the relations and interrelations between items appears as (morally?) natural and right. The provision of one or more items from that chain in a particular piece of talk gives an index and an entree to the rest of the texture. Such discourses are naturally highly bounded, that boundedness being added to by breaches being in various ways sanctionable by those who position themselves as guardians and interpreters of the ideology. Ideology is thus seen as part of the mechanism by which meaning is controlled, and closed. An ideological discourse not only provides this sense of naturalness and order, but also provides the grounds and the categories of inclusion and exclusion. The established boundaries of the discourse means that certain items and certain relations are ruled out in various ways and on various grounds. It is easy to see on this basis where the struggle for power enters in at the level of discourse. It is clear already that those in control of the policing of the boundaries are in a position of power. The edges of the discourse are in need of protection to retain control of the closure on potential meanings emerging. The development of unwanted and uncontrolled relations in the border regions can significantly alter the whole of the discourse. This is potentially subversive, especially if such relationships threaten to challenge the required naturalness of the established relations and to reveal them as merely conventional and arbitrary.

Participation , as a newness, as otherness, has this potential quality. It is in danger of re-aligning the relationships within the established company discourse. It could subvert the supposed naturalness of the relations between items as say, 'control' and 'hierarchy', or 'management prerogative' and 'decision-making', and so on: the reader can doubtless explore some of those likely relationships for himself. The company is already taking a risk by the introduction of the item at all. Unless we assume that there is indeed a genuine desire for the established discourse to be subverted and fundamentally reconstituted - something not really born out by the manner in which the definitional process was conducted at Tridy - the need exists then for the introduction of the term to be controlled and guided. Its relations with items already in the discourse and with fresh ones also drawn from outside needs to be monitored very carefully so that there are no drastic unintended consequences.

The talk of management assumes for itself a privileged position that gives it the sole right to delineate the meaning of the term and its relationships. It claims the right to talk adequately and sensibly about participation whilst at the same time denying the veracity of any other talk which might so presume. It does not do so in absolute terms, but claims the right specifically in relation to the context of Tridy. This is a sensible move since management talk already assumes a privileged position in relation to company affairs; a privilege that is acquiesced to and colluded with by most company members. Indeed, the fresh presentation of participation trades on and exploits this agreed authority of management talk to apply itself to, and define,all major matters relating to the company. Management discourse is taken-for-granted as the natural discourse on company matters.

Many of the points in the text where participation is returned to domains of discursive familiarity and, by rhetorical means have already been instanced at various times in numerous preceding sections - to run through all of them here would perhaps be too lengthy a task and entail excessive repetition. But it is important to analyse in more detail some of the more salient textures (note the possible substitution here of 'connotational clusters' or 'vocabularies/ rhetorics of motive'). Those instances where the language is more overtly ideological and reflexively supportive of the dominant social formation - either in terms of the wider society, or localised in relation to the company.

Participation, mystery and academe

The frank and obvious newness of the term requires something more than a mere reliance on the habitual privilege of management's position. This partly explains why the consultants are seen as so important and necessary. They provide at least a credible bridge between the common company discourse and the referenced other discourses from which participation avowedly emerges. Participation is seen to emerge from a source external to the company discourse and that fact must be accounted and provided for. The term requires this element of newness for the rhetorical conveyance of the image of change for the better; for a sense of difference from that which already exists and which is assumed to be at least partially inadequate. But that newness must be controlled and explained. The consultants are positioned as translators. They are presumed to be able to recode the mysteriousness of the term 'participation' in academic discourse into the discourse of the company and the shop-floor. The term's presence in that academic discourse is both a source of its

mysteriousness and the partial justification for its introduction into the context of Tridy. Its roots there give it both credibility and the requirement that it be translated. Its importance and its strangeness are aligned. The consultants are taken as holders of the key to that translation. Academics are ideal persons to employ as transmittors of truth and reality, for that is indeed their stock in trade, is it not? They are pursuers after, and purveyors of, knowledge and truth; that is their commonly ascribed raison d'etre.

Indeed the consultants are at times made to stand as authors of the participation text. Or as representatives of a collective authorship of which they are qualified components. Or as legitimate interpreters (or even critics) of a body of work, in which case they stand at least as authors of their interpretations. As authors of the 'participation text' they are then viewable as guarantors and arbiters of the meanings of that text. The truth of the text they have 'written' is locatable in them. This supposed authorship and the concomitant attribution of the right to decide on questions of meaning is also assumed by certain sections of management, and even literally at times when concrete texts are produced by members of the management group.

Participation and Representational Democracy

Possibly the major, and most overt, ideological movement in the text centres on the relation of participation and democracy, or more specifically a version of representational democracy. The management definitions and presentations begins to contruct textures of meaning and part of that includes the series of relations formed by the link between 'participation' and 'democracy'.

The relation is established early on in the development of the scheme and attains a rapid ascendency and fixity. It is a relation

that immediately and at most points in the text is taken and wholly obvious, right and natural. It indexes, of course, a completely familiar and habitual region of political discourse. The company discourse, in relation to participation, at this point exploits the relation it readily makes with the traditional political culture shared by organisation members. Political processes are held to be naturally, and morally, cast in that discourse. Political questions and problems are held to be explainable and understandable from within that discourse. The democratic principle is held, if you will, as an almost incorrigible proposition within the community. The entrance of participation-as-political process into that discourse, its easy assimilation into the discourse, only serves to reflexively reaffirm the veracity of that incorrigible proposition.

The very rapid and ready acceptance of the association operates to indicate that the ideological discourse was widely familiar and shared within the Tridy context. There were virtually no dissenting voices. It is a pervasive ideological movement that rapidly fills a linguistic space, erects barriers and excludes alternatives. There is very little conception that participation-as-a-political-process could, or should be handled within some other form of political discourse than that of representational democracy.

The establishment of the relation 'participation-representational democracy' accesses a highly valued and familiar discourse. It provides a ready and comfortable discourse that offers welcome relief to those faced with a definitional vacuum in relation to the insinuation of 'participation' into company discourse. It provides a position of intelligibility that begins to provide the means of finding sense in the notion. The offer of a discourse that will provide a site for the term becomes virtually irresistable, especially given its familiarity. It provides a means of getting a handle on the new and worrying term.

Its formed relationship within a system of other relations that are already known and understood, makes it comprehendable and means that it can now be talked about by the audience in seemingly sensible ways.

The dominance of the democratic discourse on a wider front means that such relationships do form themselves easily and appear not only as natural but morally right. The representational system with all that entails, a debating forum, elective mechanisms and so on, is the natural embodiment of the principle of political democracy in the dominant ideological discourse shared by most participants. Such talk readily assumes a naturalness and a correctness. Certain other possible political discourses are already made unlikely by the hegenomy of the democratic discourse.

It is not simply the acceptability of the initial relation 'participation-representational democracy' that is important, but that relation embeds 'participation' in a whole series of other relations, or in Burke's terms, places it in relation to a connotational cluster. For instance it connotes notions of fairness and equity. It registers with a historical discourse going all the way back to the Greek City State of Athens. It connotes individual rights - it connotes individualism. But perhaps more importantly it links participation to 'things as they are' - the established order of things. It ties participation, in the context of Tridy, to what are taken to be wider features of the social structure. In a sense it is a movement that ensures that participation would not realise any radical potential it may have. It can only be radical in a context of Tridy which conceived of itself as a reactionary arrangement out of step with the rest of society - but other rhetorics have already assured that the company is, rather, situated at the forefront of movements in the wider society.. It can thereby no longer aspire to a radicalism in relation to the wider social formation.

The introduction of the notion of participation within the context of company affairs is provided with an appropriate and morally acceptable site by its positioning within this wider political discourse. But this has to be put against the habitual discourse on industrial relations matters at Tridy. Reference back to the early conversations with the shop-floor and management reveals that the discourse was based more on a language of paternalism and hierarchical principles. It has been repeatedly made clear that many of the shop-floor colluded with a talk that ceded the right to decision-making to management. There was an acceptance of the necessity, if not the rightness of managerial authority: someone has to make the decisions. There was, the reader will recall, even a sense that the management had the right and the duty to assume responsibilities; that was their function; that is what they were being paid for. There was an acceptance then of talk that recognised the inevitability of a hierarchical structure, of the right of managers to make unilateral decisions, of the inequalities of power, and a tacit acceptance of the right of management to control, to punish and to reward. One might suppose that there is a clash between this texture of meaning and that being proposed with the political democracy discourse. The linking of the new term 'participation' with the discourse on democracy has a counteracting strength by virtue of its assumed naturalness and goodness. The task still remains to effectively incorporate that discourse into the concrete context of industrial relations affairs at Tridy.

There is a likely clash between the espoused project - the introduction of a partcipation scheme - and the existing modes of discourse and structures of the company. There is a disparity verging on contradiction between the discourse of control, punishment, hierarchy and unilateralism and paternalism and the proposed discourse that

associates participation with democracy. Particularly given the value connotations of the term 'democracy'. One might say that the texture of meanings around the notion of democracy and participation do not happily cohabit the same linguistic space as those forms of discourse associated with highly hierarchical company structures.

There are boundaries around the discourse on political democracy that mark off certain relationships as heretical. The meaning of what is present within the boundaries is made at least in part by its paradigmatic relationship to elements that are absent, that lie formally outside the boundaries. These are relations of difference between the present and the absent. At the broadest level, for instance, the very term democracy is in a relation of difference with such items as totalitarianism, or fascism, or autocracy, or plutocracy. From this point of view it can be supposed that portions of the traditional company discourse on industrial relations matters are outside of the boundary of the discourse on political democracy. There is a requirement to bridge that gap; to effect an interpenetration of discourses or language codes. This is at the core of the definitional process and at the core of the critical practice that seeks to reveal it; it is also reflexively the heart of the methodological dilemma whereby the researcher is faced with the interpenetration of the language codes of the phenomenon he has been investigating and the scientific codes that he is obliged to use in reporting those investigations. Here too lies the more dramatic dilemma of the possibility of saying something new, of commeting on the unfamiliar (or even the familiar) in ways other than those that simply restate what is known. It is my contention that it is always at this point that language becomes figural. It is the job of rhetoric to effect that interpenetration: or rather it is the job of rhetoric to efface the disparity between the discourses, to paper over the cracks and produce a version that seems cohesive and without

contradiction.

I might already posit some possible strategies in relation to Tridy:

1. There might be a move to suppress those features of the participation discourse that foreground its natural antipathy to the apparent structures of control and coercion.

2. Modify those portions of the company discourse that release the associations that conflict with the espoused participation discourse: at least this may be undertaken contextually such that in those situations where 'participation' is likely to be a feature of the talk, talk that surfaces the elements of the company discourse that are antithetical to the democracy discourse, are played down or avoided.

3. Define participation in ways that make it seem more compatible with existing structures and patterns of discourse. Participation is so defined that it matches at least portions of the existing discourse and breaks loose from some of its relations with the democracy discourse that create the contradictions. The relations that participation forms are carefully monitored and controlled such that it is made to more readily occupy the same linguistic space as the existing hierarchical discourse.

At Tridy, I believe that all these and other strategies were present. But two points need to be made at this point. Firstly, the word 'strategies' implies a scheming self-conscious manipulation that may not have been present. I am not suggesting that management actively sat down and considered all the rhetorical implications of what they were saying. Their own involvement in a range of discourses would entail that certain constructions and relations would be more apparent and obvious. Secondly, and this also has some bearing on the preceding point, as suggested briefly above, the use of these strategies (if I can continue to use that term) would be contextually determined to some degree. The textures of meaning constructed and the rhetorical 'ploys' used would depend upon the particular context. They would vary as they emerged in particular interactional circumstances. Thus talk between the consultants and certain managers would feature different textures of meaning from a talk involving the representatives and line management. The nature of the discourse and the rhetorics involved would alter as the scheme developed. The discourse does not come to assume a stable state but is constantly emerging and in process.

Participation, Meetings and other things

The texture of 'participation-representational democracy' has a kind of sub-texture embedded in/or connoted by it. It is a further movement that recuperates participation to a familiar company discourse. Part of the fabric of meanings around representational democracy is the notion of the meeting of the representatives to discuss and decide on issues. It is a simple step to suggest that participation should be structured in terms of meetings. Meetings are, of course, a sacred representation of traditional management practice. Managers proceed by means of meetings, it is an integral part of their discourse, something they are familiar with and happy operating within a framework of.

Around 'representational democracy' there develops a virtual 'matrix of meanings' associated with meetings. The whole paraphenalia of agendas, minutes, chairpersons, committees and so on. All a central part of management discourse and part of the institutional arrangements by which they normally conduct their affairs and control things. The mechanisms of control are already structured around that matrix within the company. The entrance of participation within that matrix draws it into those established mechanisms that are the stamping grounds of management but relatively alien territory to the shop-floor. The language of participation is laid over the language of managerial practice and control - drawn into the established terrain of company culture. This movement to involve participation in the matrix of meanings also achieved a rapid acceptance (partly because of the already established link of P. - and representational democracy and the espoused proximity of the matrix to representational democracy). It was taken as a natural and obvious way of proceeding.

Participation, Company discourse and non-participation

The management talk thus creates one texture of meaning for participation that ties it to the conventional and ideologically familiar discourse of representational democracy. A texture that is comforting and has a natural appeal to the audience. But this by no means exhausts the textures of meaning that are built up. Another major and necessary portion of the texture is composed around the relationship of participation to the existing company structures and discourse. It is here that the texture becomes most convoluted and complex. This is especially so since it is at this point that there is a potential clash between the item participation and those portions of the texture that relate it to democracy and the representational system, and the common and habitual discourse of the company. There are others too, as we shall see.

It will be recalled from previous sections that initially the management discourse actually avoided the use of the term 'participation' at all. This displays the uncertainty felt about the potential meanings of the item. It may reflect either a lack of developed meaning amongst management, or else a realisation that the item was new and unfamiliar and potentially dangerous. It was introduced by association; by the backdoor as it were. The management group in their early discourse preferred to use the term 'worker involvement' for this reason. A term still vague but perhaps more familiar and less highly charged than the other. Some of the ramifications of that usage have already been explored. In the company documentation at this stage the term 'participation' did appear, especially in those discussion documents prepared by the personnel department. But, in those early, uncertain and cautious stages it was left anchored in the somewhat distant and alien discourses of academic and professional management literature. That is, 'participation' was referred to but only in the context of a theoretical position and argument that did not, as yet, directly impinge on concrete events at Tridy. The notion was distanced from active company discourse within the safe confines of some other arena of discourse. The notion of 'worker involvement' could be set up as different to participation as conceived in that literature whilst at the same time claiming links to it. 'Worker involvement' was in some cases presented as a type of sub-category of participation, subsumed by it but still different. In this way it freed itself from any potential harmful or radical connotations that might have been said to affix to the notion of participation as presented in those other academic and political discourses. It could be presented as in the same linguistic realm as participation, even as a step towards it, but it also stood on its own as a different and less worrying and more familiar notion.

The management staff would not even talk amongst themselves using participation in the beginning. It must be remembered that many of the managers, like the shop-floor, had a restricted definition of the meanings of participation. Certain sections of the management staff, too, had to be pursuaded of the benefits of this departure. The texture(s) around participation and other features of company discourse will be returned to later.

Participation and Science

Implied above is a feature that has already been alluded to and which remained a recurrent theme throughout much of the early development of the scheme. Namely, a tension between the drive to bring in the new, to appear as dynamic, progressive and modern, and an inertia and caution that was reflected in an uncertain and conservative attitude to the building of the programme. The twin features of company culture identified early on in this text surface here. The company wanted to present this image of the dynamic and progressive, forward-thinking American company but at the same time exuded and also supported a culture of traditionalism, conservatism, bureaucracy and paternalism. This tension finds further expression in another of the emergent textures of meaning constructed in the attempt to incorporate the notion of participation and to make it palatable and respectable to the audience.

This texture is built around a scientific and/or quasi-scientific discourse into which participation is run. There is an offshoot that I will characterise as the presentation of participation as enigma.

The scientific texture cannot really be as easily divorced from the other textures, indeed they all interpenetrate to form a complex, text that is always in process. But it is an identifiable sub-text

if you will. It was most readily apparent in the beginning, but continued to feature right the way through.

Like the other portions of the overall text, the arrangement of participation with a scientific discourse performs a rhetorical function that plays a part both in controlling the meaning of participation and in 'selling' it to the audience. It plays its part in recuperating participation back to the familiar and the acceptable.

The texture implied here is most readily made manifest in the designation of the scheme as an 'experiment'. The employment of this term, as we shall see does more than link 'participation' to a general scientific discourse, but it is that feature that I want to look to here. The use of experiment on its own would not necessarily have been that significant, but in conjunction with a range of other items and associations it ties 'participation' broadly to a scientific discourse. It has already been pointed out that the language of science or of pseudo-science had long pervaded the language of the business world just as it has become one of the major forms of discourse in society generally, especially in terms of evaluation and judgements of truth and reality. The boundaries of scientific and 'everyday' or common-sense discourse have become intertwined and confusingly inseparable. In the industrial world it is perhaps even more blatantly manifest than in some other quarters. There is, of course, a natural interface between technology and developments in manufacturing and even servicing processes, so the interpenetration of codes is hardly a cause for surprise. But in the industrial relations field, too, and all matters relating to the personnel function and man-management, the language of business is shot through with the language of the sciences; especially those of the social sciences.

Past discussions have highlighted some of the commonly recurring expressions that relate 'participation' to this particular langauge.

Talk of the scheme as an experiment relate 'participation' to this particular language. Talk of the scheme as an experiment being perhaps the most pervasive and obvious; but there was also talk of 'analysis of variables', of 'testing', of 'quantification', together with the behavioural science jargon about 'roles', 'interpersonal skills', 'intergroup behaviour', etc. This indexing of the specifically behavioural science language was particularly apparent in those situations where participation was referred to as a skill or as a style that could be taught and encouraged among individuals.

The central occupancy of the scientific discourse in the language of modern industrial societies, particularly in terms of its perceived legitimacy in talking evaluatively and in deciding upon matters of epistemology, means that it has a powerful position in the language of justification and persuasion. It is within the scientific discourse that reside most of our cultures current 'incorrigible propositions' (Mehan and Wood 1975) (refer back) and which forms the bedrock of our primary epistemic system (Maruyama 1974). In that sense it often represents the point to which the search for the guarantee and warrant for the meaning of an utterance is pursued, and beyond which it is accepted that it is not necessary to proceed. To justify and locate the meaning of some phenomenon (linguistic or otherwise) within the discourse of science is sufficient. It is largely within that discourse that truth and reality are held to be found. The truth of an utterance is ultimately grounded in an evaluation and a warrant provided by the language of science. It is to that level that disputations on matters of meaning and reality will be taken: and no further. The location of the phenomenon within that discourse provides a guarantee for the meaning and reality of it. Conversely, the failure to so locate the item, frequently ensures that the phenomenon is castigated as an untruth; as

a portion of the unreal. As such it is cast out from the language of the acceptable and true and is made an outcast, a deviant, an aberration of nature or at best an undecidable. It can be exiled and excluded to many different domains; the illusory, the false, the insane, the criminal, the non-demonstrable, the unproven. It can be cast into these realms forever, or merely reside there temporarily in a sort of purgatory until they can somehow be converted to the faith and find a place in the discourse of the godly.

The advantages of attempting to locate a phenomena or a linguistic item within the discourse of science begin to become apparent. The pervasiveness of the scientific language and its perceived epistemological legitimacy serve to make it a shared grounding and origin for the meaning of the unclear and the unexplained. Thus the effort to place 'participation' within the scientific discourse gives it this potential grounding and locates it within a dominant epistemic system. It gives the possibility of finding a legitimate and warrantable origin and guarantee for the meaning of participation. It provides for participation a position of intelligibility to which people can readily acquiesce.

At Tridy, of course, the path is not fully explored, nor need it be. Participation is not <u>rigorously</u> rooted in scientific discourse. That is, it is not pursued into that discourse in a reflexively scientific way; it is not made to conform to the procedures of the discourse in the way that items that are central to it and that circulate significantly only within it might be expected to. It is not subject to the tests and accompanying logic that the discourse purportedly demands. This is so partly because the talk about participation is not confined to the scientific discourse; it is not the only way in which it is presented and justified. It has other obligations and reference points. Participation is enabled to permeate the scientific discourse and to

form relationships across its boundaries without necessarily accruing all of the rights and obligations of items more or less permanently located there, or that are more fully embedded within it. It is again the function of rhetoric to accomplish that task.

The scientific is merely indexed by an assortment of linguistic 'markers'. Markers such as 'experiment', 'analysis', 'variables' and the rest. These more or less figural terms act rhetorically to forge a relationship between participation, the events at Tridy and the general scientific discourse. Participation is made to appear as if it is a natural occupant therein. For the audience participation is tied to the scientific discourse with all that implies for the potential for providing a guarantee for the reality and veracity of what will be said about it. It locates it within an epistemic system of which the audience is familiar and shares to some degree. The relationships within the scientific discourse already appear right and natural because of the pervasiveness of the discourse and the ideological underpinning of that form of discourse in the wider society.

It is the role of science to explain the new, the unfamiliar; phenomena that are not understood. The emergence of the unbounded and the unrelated demands an explanation and it is to the lang ge of science that the obligation commonly falls to provide the answers. People commonly expect new things to be explained in scientific terms just as in the past people would look to the language of religion to provide the comfort of a plausible explanation for the inexplicable, and to the church as the interpreters and the guardians of the means of that explanation. The newness and unfamiliarity of 'participation' and the implied or threatened changes in the 'natural order' demands such a placement within an acceptable epistemic system. The audience and receivers of this newness might come to expect a resolution in those

terms; at least they would not find it surprising if it appeared that way. Management are almost under an obligation to present participation in those terms; at least partially. In doing so they are exploiting the background expectancies of their audience and accessing a shared ideological discourse. To assist in this task they have engaged the services of 'experts' in the form of the consultants. They are presented, to an extent, as being in a position to translate the new term adequately into the scientific discourse. They need not actually do so, it is sufficient for rhetorical purposes that they be presented and accepted as the rightful and capable guardians and guarantors of the entry of participation into the mysteries of the scientific domain, and that they are warranted to pass judgement as scientists on the truth and reality of what is said and done with and about participation in the name of science. Scientists are the holy fathers, the pastoral shepherds of the new church. They are the intermediaries between the lay public and the Knowledge. They are the keepers of the scriptures and the Word. They understand the texts, the sacred texts of science and can interpret events for the people in the true light of the wisdom contained in those texts.

Management need not rely totally on the consultants for that. Indeed, the consultants showed themselves to be heretics on a number of occasions. They are able to offer their own 'lay' priests, their own 'experts'. As a group, the managers are to a degree, by definition, experts. In relation to matters of business and the conduct of industrial relations they are acknowledged masters. So, any matter relating to that domain they are said to have a specialised knowledge and insight. They to, then, can interpret and adjudicate on the relationship of participation to the company discourse and to other discourses such as the scientific. But they are aware of the need for the nomina-

tion of a more specialised expert since managers generally are too closely involved with their members in mundane and routine affairs such that their credibility as experts in other domains becomes questionable. Macheath, coming as he does from the personnel department, is an ideal 'lay expert'.

It is a discourse that is held to be rigorous and exact. The items in the text at Tridy could be said to be in paradigmatic relation to these features of the scientific discourse. The syntagmatic relation of 'participation-science' (to simplify it) 'calls-up' these other relations. In Barthes earlier terms the relation of, say, 'participation-analysis' signifies 'science'. The appearance of terms like 'analysis', denotes a particular method of approaching phenomena. These systems of denotation become themselves a system of connotation. They connate a discourse of science, they connate rigour, exactitude, the representation of reality. The relation of 'participation-science' is a rhetoric and what it signifies is an ideology contained in a discourse that is inhabited by these notions of exactitude etc. By being a part of that relation the term 'participation' comes to participate (if you'll excuse the expression) in that discourse, in that system of connotations.

The presence of the relation signifies an ideological faith in science. The scientific discourse so indexed is taken as a more or less adequate vocabulary of justification. Because participation is rhetorically made to take part in that discourse, its ground and justification is, at least partially, secured. There is no perceived need to actually pursue participation scientifically, that is, there is no requirement to subject participation to the presumed rigours of scientific method and so forth, it is only necessary, in this context, to indicate that participation can be included in that discourse. There is an implication, I suppose, that having established the relationship, there is at

least an in principle possibility of subjecting participation fully to the rigours of science, the pursuit of truth about participation by the methods of science, the pursuit of truth about participation by the methods of science. For the purposes in this context, however, there is no need to pursue the ground and warrant for participation and its relation to science beyond the terms that merely index the relationship.

The very context determines the development of the relations. The selection of signifiers in relation such as 'participation-analysis-science' is guided because in that context it is apparent that it would draw the chain back to the discursively familiar. Participation as (in this context) a new and challenging item requires a recuperation to our habitual ways of understanding. Participation is a 'problem' in a sense;our habitual (or one of the habitual) way(s) of coping with problems is to submit them to the discourse of science. The language of science is a commonly shared means by which we confirm our ways of experiencing the world. We would seek to solve our problems in the language of science - and the recurrent achievement of that reflexively reaffirms the veracity of that domain of discourse. The rhetorical achievement here is to capture and control the 'problem' posed by participation by the discourse of science. That achievement (only part of a range of similar recuperative practices) at the same time reaffirms the episteme of scientism. It also makes participation safe and non-threatening - it is now subject to the controlling and explanatory power of science - at least in principle.

Participation and the language of evaluation

An experiment generates results, thus there is the interjection again here of the language of evaluation and an association between the

evaluation of the experiment or the project and the supposed rigour of the evaluative methods of science. As the primary provider of answers, the language of science becomes the most prized and appropriate language of evaluation. Indeed the company documentation refers directly to 'results' at some points. By locating the evaluation of the scheme in the language of science, there is the promise and the likelihood of correct and legitimate answers being found. The evaluative techniques will be able to divulge the truth and reality about participation. The results of 'scientific experiments' can be relied upon to produce the facts. Such an espoused evaluation ensures against the untruth of mere opinion, of faith, of quackary. The scientific experiment and it's results offer the possibility of impartial, objective and literal discoveries of the truth. No one need fear that the opinions of interested parties are going to hold sway and present themselves as authentic evaluations.

But once again, there is no requirement on the part of management to fulfil the obligations of full scientific experimentation or the measures of substantial evaluation. It is rhetorically sufficient that their discourse forms the association between the supposed evaluation of participation and the modes of evaluation embodied in the scientific discourse. There is a mere indexing of that wider evaluative discourse by the interpolation of terms such as 'results' in relationship to other terms such as 'experiment'.

It must also be said that management certainly retained control over the auspices of any evaluation. They retained the right and the ability to originate and follow through any assessment of the progress of the scheme. The criteria and the means by which the scheme would or could be evaluated was almost entirely in the hands of members of senior management. This constitutes a significant power. They are in the

privileged position of being able to declare whether or not the scheme is a success or failure and whether or not on that basis the scheme should be allowed to continue. It gives them control over the destiny of the scheme. In addition I have already indicated how the mode and criteria for the evaluation is most closely tied to the manner in which things are defined. Thus if participation at one level is defined in scientific or quasi-scientific terms, then the nature of the evaluation is also established. The language of science establishes its own criteria of assessment that are checkable in particular ways.

The rhetoric that serves to involve 'participation' usefully in the discourse of science also involves it by implication in the language of a specific evaluative form. In neither case does the management actually appear to take that language seriously. There is no real attempt to conduct the scheme in ways that would assure its status as scientific experiment as judged by the guardians of scientific discourse. Nor is the espoused evaluation carried out in any rigorously scientific manner or results of a quantifiable nature reproduced. The language of evaluation actually employed is extremely vague and equivocal. It acts only as a kind of rhetorical veneer that is presumed to be situationally adequate to impart the sense of serious ordered and rigorous scientific exercise. All that is provided is a surface link between the language of participation and the language of science in the hope that the culturally significant features of the scientific discourse will come to naturally inhabit the burgeoning discourse around participation.

Participation and Change

The use of 'experiment' and some of the surrounding language serves another interesting and important rhetorical purpose. An experiment

offers up results, it suggests the search for the solution to a problem with the concomitant commitment to the improvement in the situation. Indeed the whole of the project sometimes takes on the appearance of an attempt to improve on existing arrangements. Although it is rarely made explicit there is a hidden implication that things are being changed from one situation that has inherent difficulties to one in which things are in some vague way improved. Why introduce change unless in an effort to rectify a currently bad situation and to move towards a better?

But there are some difficulties here in the company discourse. It is loathe to admit to there being any fundamental problem in the existing state of affairs. It happily points to the good industrial relations record, to low labour turnover, to the financial success of the company, to the high level of wages and so on. There is no forthright expression of things being bad or of a need for change. There is also a reluctance to define the instigation of the participation scheme as anything radically new or different. There is talk of participation already existing and of the need to preserve 'normal channels' and arrangements. There is clearly not much advantage for management in drawing attention to failures in the existing system, especially if what is being put forward by way of alteration is somewhat unclear and the outcome uncertain. The drive for the introduction of any change is thus deflected for the most part outside of the organisation, to possible, threatening things beyond their control.

But at the same time there is the urge to present the company as a caring and progressive company. The dynamism of the company culture requires expression too. It demands the idea of change; particularly change in the form of progress. There is a rhetoric too that foregrounds a sense of moving ahead, of advancement, of a new

departure. Some of these apparent inconsistencies will be considered in more detail shortly.

A part of the texture at least wants to assert the sense of a newness, and the quasi-scientific language directs that movement towards a sense of the solving of a problem, of the discovery of results. The very notion of experiment connates of something new and unfamiliar. Why would one wish to conduct an experiment on that which was already familiar and understood? Science offers to explain the new, to provide solutions to problems and cast light on the inexplicable.

Participation and Enigma

The language of science attempts to present itself as the language of reality. In fact all serious attempts at speech seek to present that which is spoken of as the real and the true. It is in this way that common everyday practical utterances resemble the texts of the classic realists (and not those 'modernist' texts that reflexively challenge conceptions of reality and the means by which we construct reality in our 'reading' practices). In the move towards the real, a classic realist text travels towards a disclosure taking the reader with it. But to create the grounds for that movement it must first establish something that requires such disclosure. In literary realist texts that ground is more often than not provided by the establishment of enigma. The text creates an enigma (or enigmas) which it then proceeds to explore and finally resolve thus admitting the reader to a position where the unexplained is disclosed and understanding is achieved. The text, the author, and the reader all arrive together at the point where the enigma is solved and the real is discovered.

In a scientific discourse there is the originary point of a 'problem', cast most formally in the form of a hypothesis. The text

explores that 'enigma' and arrives at a solution and a statement about the nature of the reality of some phenomenon. I want to suggest that at Tridy the term participation stands as an enigma for the audience. It is the gap created in the text that demands a filling-in. The text itself creates the enigma; it is only the active introduction of the term in the first place by certain members that draws attention to the possibility of the emptiness in the discourse of those others present. Certain other talk marks out the space and introduces the grounds for the move towards the resolution and the disclosure. Participation is the enigma that establishes the ground for a movement. Participation is the term introduced that is unfamiliar and that requires explanation and resolution.

It is then the rhetorical introduction of the language of science that offers the possible means for that movement. It is the language of science that offers itself as the means by which the resolution of the enigma can be accomplished. It provides the promise of disclosure and a final statement about the reality of the phenomenon. That promise draws the audience in. The establishment of the enigma engages the audience and establishes the need to understand. The promise given by the application of the language of science of the resolution of that enigma keeps the audience bound to the text, keeps it 'turning the pages'. This is especially the case where the enigma is so set up that the audience does not have the discursive means of defining for itself the enigma and thus proceeding to a self-administered resolution.

The enigma stands as a disruptive element within the normal or habitual arrangement of things. It represents a challenge to existing means of interpretation. It is something mysterious, not easily understood and potentially subversive. Participation enters the company discourse in this way. For the shop-floor (and for many of the junior

managers) its placement within the talk of industrial relations unsettles the manner in which those things are normally handled. Its very newness and vagueness is mysterious and disruptive. An enigma is like a floating signifier, unattached to other elements in the discourse that it invades; likely and able to form new relationships that can alter the existing and established relationships. It introduces a state of unknowing, creates a chasm in the text. As such it is ultimately intolerable but at the same time it demands attention and exerts a fascination as a mystery.

In the classic novels of the late nineteenth, early twentieth century, the enigma is enjoyed and acceptable because of the expectation that the text will provide for its final resolution. With the denouement of the plot, the characters, the reader and the author all arrive at a discovery, a disclosure of the essence of the enigma. In the texts of Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie, the disruption of order and decency created by the unresolved death, the unexplained disappearance or other enigmatic forms, is settled and resolved in the final chapter. The mysterious is retrieved, the disruption repaired, order and familiarity are reintroduced. Holmes, that stalwart of nineteenth century rationality; the free-thinking, independent, upright man of science, solves the enigma for us. He displays the culturally applauded attributes of clear logical reason coupled to the methods and knowledge of science to show that there is really nothing dark, nothing mysterious, in nature that can defy him. There are only enigmas that are temporary aberrations that at least certain worthies can resolve for the less able, and for the common good of man. He restores order, logic, science and the bourgeois morality, to its pre-eminent position.

But note how this privileges certain positions. The interjection of the enigma must be effective. That is, it must appear as enigmatic to the audience. But in that process the author, the implied author

or some other position in the text must be ceded the right to have not only the power to introduce that enigma, but also the power to solve it on behalf of the audience. In the texts of Doyle, Holmes is usually assumed to be in possession of the path to the truth, but in other texts, say the Chandler novels, the hero may be made to act as dupe, and the reader, through the good offices of the unseen narrator, may at times be allowed access to greater knowledge than the hero. But then Marlow is not a worthy man of science, indeed he is even of dubious intellectual and moral worth. It is only proper then that some other more worthy 'character', such as the author, or the author implied through the narrator, be privileged to access to the fullness of the plot and a consciousness of the direction of the move towards the resolution of the enigma. In either case the reader/audience is positioned as that person in need of enlightenment. He must accept the enigma and be placed in the position of not being-in-the-know. There is not a total passivity here since the reader is invited to attempt to solve the enigma to work out the 'who dunnit'. But even if that is achieved before the noble disclosure by the author/hero, it only results in an affirmation of the rightness of the solution. The reader can only be right by agreeing with the text and thus reaffirming the reality and the methods propounded in the text. The reader is wholly passive to the degree that he cannot provide his own resolutions to the enigma, but must accept those given in the text (by the author) or else reject the whole text.

In the context of Tridy the enigma has a promise of resolution also; in the discourse of science; rather fortuitously. The instigation of the enigma creates the need for a movement towards its resolution: the mystery must be explained. The means for such a movement is provided by the rhetoric of the scientific language; at least in part. The talk of 'results' and of outcomes offers the promise of fulfilment. Science can and will provide the answers. It also provides the means: there is

'analysis', there is a 'programme', there are 'methods'. This traces the path for the audience towards the point at which the final disclosure can be made. The promise of the achievement of disclosure and its ultimate attainment would thereby reflexively support the value of the language of science and scientific method as the right means for searching and gaining it.

The scientific interpolation provides for the teased and puzzled audience the needed hope that all will be revealed. It retains the interest in the enigma; engages them to continue to 'turn the page'. As such it serves as a moment of inclusion: a drawing into the text. Without such a promise the audience may be overpowered by the enigma and come to simply reject it. Indeed at Tridy there were those amongst the workforce who did not accept that participation could really mean anything in the context of their working relationships; they would not accept or were highly sceptical that such a thing could offer the solution to any of their most urgent problems. Such people would reject out of hand the whole project. They would not be drawn by the act of inclusion. The enigma would remain an enigma. It was an enigma that did not interest them; that they were not even fascinated to see resolved. Here there is a preliminary failure to introduce an effective enigma in the first instance. As I have already suggested, the enigma must work as enigma if the audience is to be expected to follow the author through the narrative to the end of the story. If the enigma is uninteresting, or is already fully understood, or is not read as an enigma, then the reader is not engaged and he will dispense with the text altogether.

The establishment of an enigma (where it is effective) also serves then to position the reader in relation to the enunciation and the enonce. There is the attribution to some party of the ability and the power to

provide the means to, and the achievement of, resolution: be it the narrator, the author (or implied author), or the character(s) in the text (or some combination thereof). This reciprocally positions the reader as a more or less passive recipient of the means to, and the explanation of the enigma. Since management introduced the enigma in the first place and also did so in ways that limited the possibility of their audience constructing an alternative discouse that could re-locate the enigma in a familiar discourse of their own, it is not surprising that management should position themselves as privileged in relation to the disclosure, and that they should be collusively looked to for that. The definitional vacuum deprives many of the shop-floor of the means of constructing a discourse that can accommodate the new term and offer the possibility of solving its enigmatic quality. The simultaneous proposal of specific definitions on the part of management also serves to tie them into particular definitional frames that negate the likelihood of the perception of alternatives that could place the enigma in a different mode of discourse and thereby diluting its enigmatic effect.

As things were, there was a move that enabled the management group to position themselves as the authors of the story, the holders of the means to the resolution of the enigma. This is not to say directly that they proposed themselves, or a representative, as the sort of 'Sherlock Holmes' of the 'participation mystery', but rather that they were seen to offer a mode of discourse, or better still a textual ground within which the expected and hoped for resolution would be found. And that textual ground is provided by the embedding of the enigma of participation within a (partially) scientific text. There is not a proposed privileged author necessarily (although there is that too in fact, as we shall see) but a provided text. The resolution is

generated in the possibilities of the text itself. This is the power of that piece of rhetoric that associates participation within the language of science. The language of science has the advantage of reifying itself. It becomes a language divorced from the individuals that construct it. It asserts itself as the solver of mysteries. It does not sound bizarre to say that "Science can solve the problem". Science itself becomes the power, a causitive and critical force in its own right. Management need only offer up participation to this omnipotence; its own machinations will reveal the answers. And indeed this is all they do. They invoke the deity with some mantras and some rituals that lead the congregation to now believe that the issue is in the safe and competent guardianship of Science. The liturgies of experiment, of training, are performed; there are pious incantations of the sacred scriptures - mention of academic texts, the referral to results and programmes - and the congregation is prepared to deliver up their doubts to the wisdom of the Science. The rhetoric only calls upon the ritualistic, there is no need to delve into the deeper mysteries.

But, of course, the management do also place a character in a privileged position in the text. The consultants, and to a certain extent, Macheath and some of the other senior management elite, are sited as bearers of the solution to the enigma. At the very least they are held up as having some access to the means by which the enigma can be resolved. They are privileged in relation to the enigma, whereas the majority of the shop-floor are thereby cast as mere readers who are dependent upon these heroes and authors for the resolution of the enigma and the reinstatement of order; both moral and physical. It should be said that the consultants were reluctant heroes, they wanted to persist with the view that the problems should be

collectively defined and that the move to the resolution of the enigma (if it existed on their version) should similarly be a concerted activity. They wanted to deny that there should be privileged positions in relation to the text.

The creation of enigma is also a part of the general process towards closure. This is so because the resolution of enigma is the conveyance of truth and reality. With the resolution of the enigma we reach the end of the story. The meaning is fully revealed and presented in absolute form. The resolution on offer is the only one unless we reject the whole of the text: or unless like John Fowles the text is sophisticated enough to allow within itself two resolutions that the audience can select. But then the language of science does not normally allow for such a device and in the will to power in significant interactions people would not be interested in such a liberty. They want to present their versions as the authoritative ones.

Participation, experiment, denial and reversal

There is a difficulty remaining here however. That which is outlined above does not exhaust the rhetorical function that the relationship between 'participation' and 'experiment', and some of the other language of science, accomplishes. 'Experiment' particularly, gives expression to the tentativeness and uncertainty on the part of management. It conveys a sense of temporariness and contingency. It distances participation and the scheme generally from the normal course of events at Tridy. It is still not accepted as being part of the established order of things. Its inclusion is dependent upon the 'results' of the experiment; even though those 'results' are barely defined and unlikely to appear in any concrete form. It is a rhetoric that allows the management group to hedge its bets. If they discover that they are unable to control the meaning of participation and it develops in

unanticipated ways, they have already established this escape clause. The thing was after all only an experiment and as such it is quite legitimate to assert that it has failed and therefore the project (a term which also to some extent is made to serve the same purposes) can be terminated and things can return to the status quo ante.

This, in part, reflects a genuine uncertainty on the part of those managers involved. They too were not entirely clear as to the total meanings that might emerge in relation to participation in the context of Tridy. Their own discourse on the subject was not fully developed but itself had an emergent quality. There was at least an awareness that the development of a discourse in that sort of area of industrial relations might conceivably slip over in to the type of discourse that would provide a point of entry for trade unions.

One might say that for management too the notion of participation was enigmatic. Management are aware of the existing arrangements and have learnt to cope with and handle that, but this newness could threaten those relationships and introduce an unsettling and potentially subversive element. It makes sense then, to retain the possibility of returning to those tried and tested arrangements that they know they can control. By casting participation as an experiment or as a mere project it creates the linguistic possibility of denying the establishment and organisational status of the scheme. It can always then be withdrawn from and put down as a mistake, as a failed experiment, and things can return to normal.

If participation appears as enigma, for management as well as the shop-floor, then it can be made to retain that enigmatic quality and thus be excluded from the normal discourse at Tridy. An unresolved enigma is an unacceptable tension within a text. It is a dangerous one too for it demands a continued effort on the part of the audience

and will call upon a certain reflexive activity that may result in the reader coming to his own resolutions. It is important, then to banish an enigma that continues unresolved. Here, if participation continues as such, even to management, it can be banished to that land of failed experiments. And with the circumscribing language of science, the land of land of failed experiments is the land of untruth. A failed experiment is, amongst other things, something that has been shown not to be able to talk about reality and display some truth about it, in sanctionable ways. It can then be cast out of the discourse as untrue and unreal. In this instance, it need not be cast out in absolute terms but merely in the context of Tridy. In the world of Tridy the 'experiment' of participation can be said to not have worked; to have been shown to have nothing to say about the reality of life in that world.

As was shown earlier, the use of 'experiment' continued for quite some time. It was present right up to, and including the extension of the scheme to the Packaging area. To a decreasing extent it remained present, although backgrounded, at least up until the introduction of the Dry Products group. It still had a rhetorical force in the discourse about participation to a degree that diminished in relation to the perceived probability of the institutionalisation within the established framework of discourse and practices at Pencham.

Frankenstein and E.T. - the limits of the scientific discourse

The texture of meaning built around the language of science in relation to participation was not seen as sufficient to engage the shop-floor audience. Within the context of a modern, purportedly progressive, western manufacturing company it was perhaps a necessary textual arrangement, but with regard to the inclusion of the workforce, it was also

perhaps inadequate on its own. The dominance of the language of science within everyday discourse must be set against a continued suspicion and scepticism amongst the lay population. This is reflected in some features of popular culture. Even as late as the fifties popular cinema indexed that wariness with a continuation of the Frankenstein Myth in all those 'B' 'horror' and sci-fi movies of that time. All those Bela Lugosi films in which the mad scientist tampers over much with nature with dire consequences. Science is shown to be able to transform nature, but horribly. The scientist encrouches on nature and is unable to control the consequences of his interference. Nature has its revenge. The scientist abuses his power and is chastised either by a god-fearing society or by the wild outcome of his own creations. 'Creations' is opposite, since the sin remains of the usurping of the power of God. The attempt to shift the focus of the prime mover from nature or God to Science or man, the scientist is a heresy and an arrogant abomination that must be seen to be punishable. Here the language of science is in process; there is a transition through this period where science increasingly invades everyday discourse and attains a legitimacy and a respectfulness, whilst it remains a dangerous and heretical movement away from God, nature and all that is pure simple and understood. Even the science of the future is under suspicion. The science fiction genre of literature serves as a cautionary tale lest the scientific get out of control, attains an autonomous dominance that derides the human and the humane. It is perhaps significant that only today can popular culture produce films like 'Close Encounters' and 'E.T.', where space travel (the doyen and the jewel in the crown of scientific enterprise), the science of the future be presented without connotations of fear and self-inflicted catastrophe, but rather with hope, optimism and a reinterpreted 'Brave New World'. (However,

there are ways in which these films recuperate the science of space to the natural, albeit an extended sense of the order of nature.)

The point is that although the language of science has successfully invaded and territorialised the domains of routine everyday talk at a surface level; there persists a suspicion and a caution, even a fear, in relation to the activities of science in its formal and professional guise. A presentation of the definition of participation in wholly scientific terms would, I feel, have caused these suspicions and fears to surface more readily. Rather, it was clear that management were not happy to allow that association to stand on its own without proposing other textures of meaning that would locate participation in more familiar and less risky areas of discourse.

Participation and Skill

There was a further sub-theme in the texture of meanings developed around the scientific discourse. Or rather there is an off-shoot from that arena. This relates to the alignment of participation with talk of 'training' and 'skills' and 'style'. It impinges on the broader scientific texture by the association between these terms and the social sciences specifically.

It became a frequent occurrence in the management discourse about participation to refer to the need to develop 'skills' and to change and adopt a 'style' of management. This was related directly to the supposed need and possibility of training individuals for these skills and styles. The reader can refer back and locate these various references in past sections. Further back I relate this portion of the discourse to the contextual requirement that the personnel function be seen to be operating in organisationally appropriate ways. But it also has a further rhetorical force.

In the first place, as already suggested, the language that surrounds talk of skill and training is a sub-theme of the more general scientific discourse. The talk of the personnel department and others in relation to training is riddled with terms culled from the recent social sciences. It most directly accesses that section of the social sciences that valorises the individual and that sees the derivation of problems and their solution in the individual's psyche and resultant patterns of behaviour. Change can be effected by changing the individual. As I suggested earlier, persons are to a greater or lesser degree defective according to this conception. Nature is shown to be inadequate and science capable of manipulations that can control nature in the human and rectify those inadequacies. Again, science holds out the possibility that the wildness of participation can be tamed by the ministrations of the language and practices of science.

The implication is that the ability to act in a manner that is conducive to the notions of participation, or even more baldly, that to act participatively is, at the very least, a neglected and lost ability, or more radically, that it is not a natural one at all. In either case it is a skill that can be taught and learnt by the individual. It also locates participation in the individual. It is removed thus from more overtly structural or interactive considerations. Participation and the ills it promises to right are retrieved for the humanistic ideology that centres the individual at the logos of matters, and deflects away from matters of the power struggles of the battles for the promulgation and defence of domains of discourse, and the construction of structural arrangements that are made to appear as immutable and natural.

This is an important, if small amount in the definitional process, for embodied in it are some important assumptions and background expectancies, and also some important points at which the rhetorics clash

both with each other and with the espoused project.

In the first place this relationship between participation, training and skill begins to reinforce the otherness of participation. It implies that participation is, at least to a degree, not a natural phenomenon, and that it is absent from significant portions of existing arrangements. It is positioned as an alien. And not only as an alien in the sense of foreign and different, but also as unnatural and wild. In this way, the definition on offer here, makes an addition to the establishment of participation as enigma. At the same time it also positions someone as being able to assist in the resolution of the enigma: in this case those persons at Tridy who are given the responsibility for training on site. This effectively means the personnel department in general and Macheath in particular. Thus by suggesting that participation is an alien skill that, nonetheless, can be induced by some skillful training, there is a further movement that provides a position of power to those who define themselves as able to conduct that training, with a simultaneous positioning of other parties as blind, dependent, literally unskilled and dependent upon others. The 'trainers' position themselves as privy to the grounds of the enigma and the means of obtaining an ascendency over it (the sense of enigma is stretched perhaps too far at this point).

The sense of otherness is conducive to the imparted definition of newness, of change and progress that is important to the marketing of participation and which makes it concur with some of the organisational cultural values of progressiveness, and forward thinking. It serves to create a need and a vacuum in the audience that management are able at the same time to offer to fill, and fulfil.

But participation is subtly related to the unknown, to the wildly uncontrolled. In some guises it appears as unnatural, as alien and in need of redemption. But one might easily also suggest that its place in the discourse here merely locates it in the familiar position between Nature and Culture, between a troublesome and uncontrollably wild and violent nature and the civilising and taming influence of the highspot of culture; education. That is to say that participation is made to appear as both natural and unnatural. In either conception it is frightening and wild and capable of control through the ministrations of training and the goodly wisdom of the social sciences and the professional personnel manager. The binary division Nature-Culture begins to creak heavily in this type of situation; which is perhaps as it should be. The 'naturalness' (if one can conceivably employ the term) of the relationship is made to look pale and unfounded and reliant on contextually relevent discourse to support it.

In any case the rhetoric that aligns participation with skill and the need for training and thus establishes it as unnatural in relation to the established order of things in the context of Tridy, or natural in the case of being a part of a rough and chaotic Nature that education tames and makes civilised; makes it threatening and in need of control. That is the significant point of the rhetoric. It creates the need and the justification for the assumption of a position of power wherein lies the capacity to control, explain and instruct. Those able to define that position for themselves simultaneously define others as pupils, dupes, ignorami and dependents.

The proposition that participation is a skill, and that it can be trained for, entertains the possibility that it can be brought under the rational control and administration of some party. It creates a space in the discourse that can be filled by a discursive practice that can

offer the promise of achieving that control and administration. It brings it under the control of those who are labelled 'trainers' or are so labelled by others. In the industrial context that label is institutionally attributed to certain sections of the personnel department. They already have a training function and individuals described as trainers. Thus participation is made to reside in that familiar ground. The knowledge and the power to control is placed in the hands of a managerial minority. If this supposedly natural and obvious delineation of the power to control and educate is not seen as sufficient, then the management can, in addition, invoke the consultants as acclaimed experts. The consultants are allegedly familiar both with the language of participation, and with the knowledge and techniques that establishes them as credible and likely educators and trainers. After all, are they not professional teachers? They stand, together with the organisations own 'trainers', as the holders and providers of the wisdom and knowledge needed to control participation and to retrieve it from its wild state and civilise it through education. They are in a position to know and develop the skills that are required to be participative. They can do so, not incidentally, by their familiarity with the social sciences that are said to hold the answers to questions in this domain.

Participation and Rationality

This texture returns participation to the rational and the ordered. It intimates at a potential otherness, an anarchic strangeness - and also at a gap in the personality of the audience - but also suggests that it can be made familiar and can be controlled; that persons can be made more complete. There can be seen to be a surrounding body of associations that reinforce the sense of participation being retrieved to the rational, the ordered and the logical. As already pointed out

there is talk of 'analysis', 'frameworks', 'programmed', 'assessment', 'schedules' and the rest. Surrounding participation thus, it contributes to the conveyance to the audience that their managers have the situation under control. They are proceeding as good sensible managers should, ordering and structuring the situation for the benefit of their subordinates. In short, they are making a fine display of 'managerialness'. The unsettling connotations that the new term engenders in the audience are thankfully seen to be firmly under the control of an expert and worthy management. There is really nothing to fear as long as the workforce allow management to continue to control participation, as they are clearly well suited to do. The language around participation now again looks familiar, it indexes those attributes of rationality, order and good sense that are accepted and recognisable attributes of good managers. This talk is familiar company talk; it is the way many things are normally talked about in the company.

The relieving bonus of all this is that, not only is participation made safe and controllable by management, but that there is also the promise that it can become familiar, understood and usable by the workforce too. Participation is only a skill, or even less threatening (though less controllable), only a style; a skill, furthermore that can be acquired. Skills are just those range of abilities that humans can master: given some training and some practice. It can be put at the disposal, theoretically, of all people. Again this incorporates participation into the realm of the individual, subject to individual will and intentionality. Skills are there to be used, to apply in real situations to other things. Participation here becomes an instrument at the service of man. Perfectly chained now and usable at the individual's discretion.

Participation and Management Style

The final portion of the texture that I want to refer to at this point (although this does not exclude the reader from exploring other regions for himself) retreats from this public and universal availability of participation. Aware of the real (participative) possibility of having all 'skilled' in the delights of participation and the liberating effect that could have, much of the above definition is presented only to other members of management; those at a junior level to the inner cabinet. If it is made readily available to all and sundry there is a likely premature foreclosure of the enigma and a potential loss of sectionalised control. The loss of the enigmatic entails a loss of that which draws the audience in, and this should not occur until the 'author' has outlined his plot and worked out a controlled route to the deliverence of the truth and reality of the text that he wants to impart.

The talk of skills and style is couched only, or almost only, in terms of 'management skill' and 'management style'. It is managers who must develop and be taught a style of participative leadership; it is management who must be schooled in the skills of participation. This talk clearly retains the initiative with management and the existing hierarchical arrangements of Tridy. Managers become participative managers: but still managers nonetheless. Control remains where it has always been and there is the same paternal movement 'from the manager - to the shop-floor'. In this way participation does not belong to the workforce at all, it remains the exclusive province of management. Participation becomes again something that is done to the shop-floor by management, or something, at best, that is given to them by a fatherly and caring upper echelon.

Participation and Ownership

This latter brings us to another texture. But here there is not a coherent, contextually determined body of verbal relationships, rather there are various linguistic markers that run throughout the text. This refers to the language of ownership in relation to participation generally and the scheme in particular. Much of the talk about participation emanating from management is characterised by words and phrases that claim the ownership of the notion of participation and of the concrete project at Tridy. More specifically, the talk is about, and amongst, a limited senior management group that includes the consultants. On occasions the reference is directly to these individuals or to a group of them. Sometimes, however, there is an implied corporate identity; participation is seen to belong to the Company.

The language of ownership is quite significant: I have already drawn attention to the paradoxical relationship between that and the espoused language of mutuality, sharedness and the rest. But there is also a movement here that positions certain members of management as potential authors of the participation text. They present themselves as the architects and proprietors of the scheme. Talk is of 'what can we do', 'Our future plans', 'how can we involve our employees?'. On occasions they do, of course, act quite literally as authors; it is certain senior managers who produce documents and other texts about participation and its place and development at Tridy. As authors they hope to talk directly to their audience and to convey to them a message that the audience can accept unequivocally. They transmit a message that conveys a coherent and unified truth about the nature of participation and what it means in the context of Tridy. This positions the audience as passive recipients of the message and receivers of the reality and truth of what is contained in the message.

As authors they claim the right to talk authoritatively and finally. What they have to say about participation is to be taken as the

meanings. They claim an authority over what they say and the texts they produce. The language of ownership seeks to exert control not only of the emergence of the scheme, but also of the meaning of the utterances spoken in relation to the scheme. They situate themselves at the centre of the text and come then to act as the originators and the guardians of the meaning of what is produced in the text. This provides a further effort at closing off the potential meanings around participation.

Participation and Historical/Social Inevitability

There is a further important texture of meaning that is built up, particularly in the early stages, and that contextually emerges for the benefit of the selling of the scheme to other managers, although it also has some rhetorical value as far as the rest of the workforce is concerned. This texture centres around an established relationship between participation and a kind of social determinism and an historical inevitability. It is a texture that again faces outwards; relating participation to discourses outside of the normal company one. It serves to justify participation by reference to features and movements in the wider society. Whilst some textures relate participation to familiar features of the company, its arrangements and discourse, this texture relates it to wider structural and historical features on a broader front and suggests that participation at Tridy is part of an inevitable drift in society that it is obliged to keep apace with. Factors external to the company and beyond its control are posited as justifications for the emergence of participation at Pencham.

There were a number of texts produced by management and the personnel department in the early stages that attempted to relate participation to social and historical events beyond the company gates. The

reader can refer back to previous mention of those texts to locate specific examples. There is claimed to be a general movement in the wider society wherein there are changes in the political and educational spheres. That is there are said to be 'forces' in society that act as a background and a determination and a justification for the development of participation at Tridy. These 'forces' relate to the four spheres of; education, politics, the legal and the social. Each of these arenas of discourse contributes intertextually to the debate surrounding notions of industrial democracy and make its appearance seem natural and inevitable.

There are said to be changes under way in society on all these fronts that mean that there is a general and noticeable shift towards an increased democratisation; specifically then, as this bears on the industrial front. In society generally, and fostered by fresh educational practices, there is a greater demand for the democratic process to be extended, people are becoming accustomed to a greater degree of participation. It is inevitable that this should be extended to the industrial sphere. This is the sort of argument that many of the proponents (be they academic or political - if such a clear cut distinction can be made) of industrial participation make. Indeed there is a sense in which the arguments being put forward by these managers from Tridy reflects an awareness of those arguments in other places; it is in these terms that participation is justified in other quarters. The management discourse indexes these other, already elaborated, arguments. That they appear in worthy academic and professional sources adds to the strength of making that connection.

The external 'forces' on the political front refers to the increased preoccupation at that time of all political parties with the issues of industrial democracy. There was a significant political discourse developed at the time around the question of industrial democracy.

The company discourse acknowledges that and presents it as an indication that participation is part of an important political process. All parties are discussing it; it has become a central part of the British political scene. By also participating in that debate and responding to it, the company are demonstrating that they are in touch with the heart of the political process. They will not be left behind by a blindness to the turn of political events. Furthermore, participation must be relevant and important if all the political parties, and the peripheral political groupings such as the TUC and the CBI, are engaged in a serious dialogue about it.

The reference to legal 'forces' is closely connected to the above. There was an expression of the expectation that, given the political interest, there would soon be some statutory requirement for companies to instil some form of industrial democracy into their companies. The appearance of the Bullock report and various government papers led the senior management to predict that some legislation would not be far off. There was talk of the danger of being legally compelled to conform to some governmental statutes relating to participation. There was talk of avoiding being coerced, and of not being made to introduce a scheme that did not suit the needs of the company. The management group couched it in terms of the need to introduce a scheme that was tailored for the company and that could be accommodated to their existing arrangements. They did not want to have something forced on them that they would have little control over and which may not adequately suit their purposes.

In all this there is a rhetorical attempt to give the impression that participation is a part of an inevitable social and historical process. The fact of participation cannot be ignored. There are forces in the wider society, beyond the control of the company that mean that participation, in some form, has attained an importance and that it must be responded to at some point. The language is interesting. The use

of terms like 'forces', and 'external pressures' adds to the impression that there is a kind of determinism at work that could not be resisted by the company even if it wanted to. Participation has become a reality in the wider society and will unavoidably have to be part of the company scene also at some stage in the near future.

This achieves a distancing of the need and the generation of participation from the company. Contrary to the language of ownership referred to recently, here the genesis and obligation for participation is located outside of the company in social forces and the march of time. The company presents itself as only responding to the power of events beyond their direct control. Participation was not really their idea; they are not responsible for its emergence or the need to introduce it at Tridy. This goes some way to deflecting any criticisms of their motives for introducing the scheme. It directs potential criticism of the purpose and necessity for participation away from the company to factors outside - the imponderables of societal and political process. If participation goes wrong it is not the company who are to blame but the politicians, the teachers and the nature of historical change.

But the rhetoric has a more positive force than that. It ties the decisions of the company's executives to a wider and creditable source. It demonstrates to those who might question the need and the importance of participation that it already has a place in the lofty world of politics. It shows too that the company are in touch with the tide of history and the complicated processes of society. The company documents that reference these wider forces succeed in tying participation to those other notable and worthy political and academic texts that also tackle these issues and that talk about the 'progress' in society. But more importantly they locate their own moves to initiate participation within a wider scheme of historical and social processes. The intro-

duction of participation at Pencham is made to appear as part of an inevitable social movement and as part of an historically inevitable process. Any move to challenge the need or the sense of introducing participation at Tridy is forced then to go against not only the wisdom of political and academic opinion, but also the very march of historical inevitability. To challenge participation at this point is to appear as a reactionary; as someone out of touch with the natural processes in society and to misconceive history. This is quite a lot to oppose.

It is obvious that the opinions indexed by this feature of the company's discourse covers only a limited range of views in relation to the place and inevitability of participation. There are clearly shades of opinion in those areas of wider discourse alluded to that run counter to that presented. There are political groups that deny the value of participation, there are those who do not see the extension of the democratic process as inevitable. The company documents are constructed to access only those portions of the wider discourse that support the view of the strength of these external forces. They rely too on the perceived lack of awareness on the part of the intended audience of these alternative conceptions. The definitional vacuum assumes its place in the definitional process once again here. The company texts are constructed to present particular shades of opinion and to index specific areas of discourse. At the same time they elide other areas, and knowledgeable of the gaps in the discourse of their audience, mark off the availability of alternatives.

The company at the same time asserts its independence. It claims for itself the right to control the introduction and development of participation at Pencham. The very inevitability of industrial participation and the assumed impending legislation is turned here to provide

a rational for the company introducing a scheme off its own back and in its own way. There are expressions of fear about legislation forcing a particular and potentially inappropriate format of participation. A format furthermore that is beyond the control of management. This is presented as a justification for the company introducing a scheme of its own at that point. The talk maintains that it is in the interests of nobody at Tridy to have a form of participation foisted upon them. It is far better to introduce a scheme that is tailored to suit the assumed particular needs of the company. These arguments also incorporate the views of the consultants who from the early stages had proposed a view that participation cannot be adequately derived from any a priori blueprint but should evolve amid the interactions and expressed wishes of those who are going to be involved.

The rhetoric here also serves to present the company and that set of particular managers in a competent light. It shows them to be in touch with the rest of society and the way that impinges on affairs at Tridy. They are aware of sophisticated political and academic debate. They are in tune with the political process in the country. The company is made to appear to be in-step with the tide of history; indeed it is to their credit that they are 'one step ahead'. There is a presentation of an aware, intelligent, forward-thinking company with the best interests of its members at heart. It is protecting the company and its members from unwanted and uncontrolled interference from society and particular government. It presents foisted legislation as undesirable and possible counter to the interests of all at Tridy. It hints at the bogey of state control and interference and values an independent philosophy that retains localised control. A control that pretends to be more responsive to the wishes and requirements of its own people. One might expect that such intimations of outside interference and the

'I did it my way' alternative would find an echo in the membership of the company.

The company presents itself as involved in the tide of history but assures its members that it can control that movement for the benefit of its members and not subject them to unwarranted and inappropriate interference. The company has had the insight to look ahead and anticipate events and act accordingly. If participation is inevitable, as is part of the suggestion, then it is surely better that a sensible management pre-empt events and create a scheme that is suited more directly to the wishes and needs of its members.

The texture supports and is supported by aspects of visible company culture that have been discussed before. It relates to that aspect of the company that presents itself as progressive, as modern, as caring and paternalistic. The company is in touch with the modern world, it is aware and forward-thinking. It plans ahead and anticipates changes. It introduces new systems as they become necessary in the industrial climate. And it does all this for the benefit of its members; to keep them at the forefront of developments and to project them from external interference.

There is a grammer of motives here. The 'cause' of participation is said to reside in a range of interrelated 'external forces'. These 'motives' are constructed in context and made to serve particular rhetorical purposes. The relation of participation with these forces ultimately connotes a sense of social and historical determinism. The theoretical sense of this is again unexplicated and merely indexed. The notion of historical and social determinism is taken as an adequate (at least in part) explanation of the presence of participation. The

ideology is the naturalness of the sense that historical and social 'forces' can be responsible for, can be determing of, features in the social realm such as greater or lesser participation. The fact that the nature of those 'forces' remains largely unexplicated is not the point. It is of interest to note only that the saying of 'forces' in those relations is taken as a (more or less) adequate explanation of the development of participation. Or even that it is simply assumed to be adequate. Whether it appears adequate to the audience depends upon the extent to which they share in that ideology.

There is also a sense of progress, or at least of progression here. Society is seen as in a state of change. There are movements in the political, the social, the legal and the educational realms. Interestingly too, they are all moving in the same direction - toward greater participation. By suggesting that the business, commercial realm must follow that motion also reaffirms a conception of a unitary society with all elements formed together into a cohesive whole called society. That notion of a unified, cohesive and stable society is, of course, an ideological construction itself. Unitarism is part of the company culture too.

Participation then is made to become a part of that general society, it is a movement within the general and natural movement of the cohesive body of society. Furthermore, participation is a natural part of society, a natural part of that movement. The 'forces' that create that movement are unchallengeable and unstoppable, ergo, so is participation. This is the way things are, it is the way things are going. The reference out to these 'external forces' is taken as sufficient explanation for a mirroring movement internally within the company.

Participation and Structure

There is still another major texture of meaning that is constructed in the management discourse from the beginning. This once again takes us back into the company. It relates participation not to things and events beyond company boundaries but directly to existing practices and discourse within the company. As rhetoric it serves both to further close off the meanings around participation and to recirculate the language of participation to an area that is discursively familiar to the intended audience. It further retrieves participation from the unknown and the potentially unsettling and regrounds it on a site that provides comprehendable positions of intelligibility for the audience.

This texture emerges most graphically when the managing director and others present formally the establishment of the scheme and its development to the shop-floor reps. Most particularly on those occasions when the slide-show is employed. The reader is referred back to the section dealing with management's initial presentation of participation.

In the presentation of participation in formal settings, particularly when the managing director was involved there was often an attempt to present a coherent structure and plan, and to set out a full programme for the development of the scheme at Tridy. The reader will recall the description of the presentation that included the use of projected slides. Here the metaphor of the pyramid was employed to demonstrate the structure of the company and the development of participation. Some of the features of that presentation and its rhetorical force have already been alluded to, but I want to relate again its presence as a major texture of meaning with very important rhetorical functions.

The presentation does two important things. It represents perhaps the first coherent and structured view of participation to emerge at Tridy. It posits a total picture placing participation directly in the context of Pencham and relating it to future plans and developments. It also relates participation to familiar things that are said to already exist in the company.

For many people the presentation by Sherry served to focus some of the meanings of participation and put it in a context that made sense to them. It is clear that for many, including, and especially some of the junior managers, participation had consisted of an amorphous and vague series of relationships dispersed across a number of seemingly unrelated and unrelatable discourses. The continuing ambiguity of the term was a cause for some disquiet. Sherry's presentation drew together, for the first time, some of those meanings and offered a reasonably cogent whole. There was much gratitude for this clarification. It helped to ease the burden of a constant grasping around for meaning that seemed to shift whenever one got a grip on it. It provided a stable base upon which the discourse of participation could now sensibly be developed; it provided a steady anchor and reference point.

There had been increasing pressure for there to be some explanation of the company's intentions with regard to participation and to have made apparent what plans, if any, had been made. Trouble had been generated around the issue of privilege and uneven treatment. People had begun to question why certain groups had been given the privilege to take part in such a scheme, whilst others had not. There had, too, been instances of issues raised in those groups involved impinging on those groups who were not. So contextually, the presentation was also made to serve the purposes of quieting those fears and deflecting that

trouble. It offered to those so concerned the promise of the future equal involvement of all who wished to be.

It is also a significant point in the closure of meaning. This is partly so because of what has just been said. Its very ability to offer for those disturbed souls a coherent and ordered view of what participation might mean in the particular context of Pencham, gave it considerable appeal. In terms already employed, it provided for those struggling readers a means for the enigma to be resolved; at least it promised a route to the resolution. The messiness and nebulous nature of participation is, at least temporarily, smoothed out and clarified. There is a new unity and cohesion. The circling, unconnected meanings, the uncertainty; the dispersal and the plurality are cared for. Order is restored: clarity is restored: unity is restored. Everything that an organisational heart could desire. The fuss of many and meandering meaning is curtailed and foreshortened. The unfettered are given credible connections and boundaries are established. Most significantly the meanings dispersed across other regions of discourse and the associations with strange discourses is cured. Participation is related strongly to a familiar area of discourse. And it is fixed, made steady. The ceaseless process of definition and the productivity of meaning is halted and held steady. There is a structuring of process. The convolutions of meanings emerging in process are ironed out and placed neatly in a frame, of geometric precision. This is particularly so when one considers that Sherry is also presenting a history. He is not only giving detail of future plans but also a post-hoc account of the creation and building of the scheme. The formalist structure that he provides glosses the contingent and emergent quality of that process. It belies the uncertainty, the feeling of the way, the unanticipated and the unstructured reality of the method of proceeding. In its stead is placed a careful, thoughtful, ordered and rational account.

Other textures have related participation to familiar fields of discourse, as it were, external to the company and its affairs. This texture provides the necessary connection between participation and the common discourse of the company. The supposed existing structure of the company is overtly displayed in the graphic metaphor of the pyramid. In reality it is only a triangle, but its use in that context already exploits the image and its rhetoric. Company structures are referred to in a variety of discourses in terms of pyramids. On the page this is converted into a triangle. Thus the use of triangles in the context here, indexes that intertext that relates it to industrial and other discourses where pyramids are assumed. The third plane is not vital; a solid structure is required to convey the sense of top-bottom and intermediate levels, this is achievable with the shorthand of the triangle, although the implied full structure needs to be there.

The pyramid speaks of levels: levels within the company. The company structure is said to be represented by this pyramidal shape, with its apex, its various levels and its base. The structure refers most obviously to the existing power arrangements of the company. The levels refer to the formal rights and positions of people in the decision-making processes of the company. Increasing levels indicate increased rights and invested authority to take decisions, to be in control, to punish and reward, to direct and lead. The pyramid is the whole of the factory. At the top is the managing director; at the bottom are the shop-floor personnel. Each department is further represented by the mini-pyramids embedded in the larger. The relations of geometry are duplicated in each department; each department is assumed to have broadly the same structure as the company as a whole.

This structure is a familiar and widely experienced one. It may remain questionable as to whether the audience had conceived of the

structure in just those graphic terms presented. I would suggest that the structure in that form would be recognisable to many as the type of structure that they experience in their daily lives. The images of top and bottom and of levels would seem to be rooted in much habitual talk about organisations and issues of industrial relations. Such a structure is wholly traditional and is one that is expected and accepted by most industrial participants in this country. It is seen as a natural arrangement and thereby serves ideological purposes. That the shop-floor concur largely with that image is at least partially confirmed by some of the traditional and collusive comments made by them in the early conversations I had with them, and by the fact that they did not react to this presentation negatively; indeed quite the opposite. They readily accepted that presentation and were as relieved as junior managers to have that sort of clarifying structure provided for them. There was never, at any point, a suggestion that the structure was in any way inappropriate or inaccurate.

There is a double rhetorical play at work here. In the first place there is the move to present the existing company structure in terms of the graphic metaphor of the pyramid with all the implied connotations of the top and bottom of the pile, the base supporting the peak, rising levels of power and so on. Then there is a second move to relate participation directly to this structure. The second is an explicit act of inclusion. Participation, too, is made into a framework, into a structure that is then inserted into the existing organisational structure, filling it completely. The two structures are made to appear in isomorphic relationship to each other. The now presented structure of participation is made to lie right over the existing and traditional structures of the company's formal power relations. The movement is subtle since in the same motion participation is transposed into a structure and at the same time

brought into direct confluence with the presented structures of the company's normal arrangements. It is both ordered and related to the discursively familiar at the same point.

Let's be clear. The graphic metaphor of the pyramid is firstly made to represent the organisational structure of the company's power relations. That is the first rhetorical move. It exploits a known and presumed shared conception of traditional organisation. It exploits the background expectancies of the company members. There is familiarity here; a well known ground and a dimension of discourse that is understood and accepted. At the same moment participation is also made a structure. It ceases, for the moment to be an emergent process and is fixed as a structural form. And that form is of the same substance as the structure of the existing company organisation. Participation becomes a static series of formal relationships of levels in the company, of department to department. Participation is made to depend on the relations and levels already said to be present in the company. Participation is made to rely upon the extant power relationships, the established authority positions and the accompanying rights of decision-making, control and responsibility. Finally the structure of participation, thus established, is put into correspondence with the traditional structure and the two become one; interdependent and inseparable.

The ambiguity and dispersal of participation, its otherness and newness are retrieved at several points. The naturalness of the link between the supposed organisational arrangements of the company and the formal structure in the form of the pyramid are ideologically rooted. These are expected, common and accepted arrangements. They are wholly familiar, legitimate and right. They are essentially arbitrary relations that have come to assume the position of natural ones in most domains of discourse in the western industrial world. They are like

incorrigible presuppositions; and they are reflexively self-supporting. All organisational talk tends to be cast in that form (even participation so it would seem), it provides the answers to its own questions, its effectiveness is judged in relation to its own discourses: thus, in one sense, all talk about organisations tends to reconfirm the rightful dominancy of those relations. Participation, then is made to become a part of those relations and thereby to share in its naturalness. Where before participation had been locatable in unfamiliar discourses, if at all, here it can be grounded in something that is not only familiar but natural to the point of immutable. Participation is no longer so strange, so external. It participates in the lasting and abiding structures of western industrial life. More pertinently it is enclosed in that linguistic and graphic arrangement that is said to adequately represent affairs at Tridy. It is part of the company. It is shown to be accommodated by the normal and traditional structures of Tridy, something people are familiar with, can operate in with ease, and can talk around. Participation is no longer positioned outside of the company as some alien and potentially disturbing element; it is made to cohabit the same space as the existing structures of the company. It is a sweeping act of inclusion that takes participation in, recuperating it from its mystery and its floating, non-aligned power. It is placed in the company of the familiar, it becomes the familiar; it need no longer be feared or misunderstood.

As suggested in an earlier portion of this text, the rhetorical strategy here operates as a short-cut. It is a significant move that so readily relates participation to the structures of the company, exploiting the naturalness of those arrangements and making participation a part of them. There was a need to begin to relate participation to the familiar discourse of the company. Both to control it and

to make it comprehendable and no longer a source of anxiety. Without this rhetorical ploy there would doubtless have been the need for a good deal of protracted interactional work whereby the various signifiers connected to participation are gradually connected to those others that are already common coinage in the company discourse. By this direct association of participation with the formal structures of the company it is immediately if indirectly associated with all of the familiar discourse of the company; it is incorporated into that established network in which matters of industrial relations and other company affairs are normally spoken about.

There is a strength that turns back on itself here too. If one considers some of the other areas of the texture built up around participation, particularly those areas where it is shown up as valuable, right and good, then there is a way in which the linking of existing company language, structure and philosophy with participation turns around to reinforce and reaffirm that prior language. For example, if participation is associated with 'progressiveness', then the linking of participation with existing company arrangements might be said to imply that the existing arrangements are at least condusive to progressiveness. In other words the language built-up around participation that prizes it readily becomes transferred, osmosis-like, on the basis of the close forged link, from participation to the status quo.

The rhetoric here also participates in that movement that the texture around the language of science has begun. Participation is shrouded in a language now of order, rationality and logic. The figural language of structure, of plans and programmes, polices the meanings of participation into a coherence and order that belies its naturally uncharted and wild development. The disparate and unconnected meanings and associations are marshalled into an intelligible whole.

The process, so contingent unplanned and off-the-cuff is transposed and corsetted into a structure. It is made to conform to standards of rational development. The organisational values of order, clarity, coherence and planning and demonstrated to apply in the case of participation. It is made more acceptable, palatable and recognisable in that way. As a bonus, the managing director is able to present himself to his peers and others as possessing those same qualities. Organisations and their leaders should be involved in planning and in proceeding in a rational and logical manner to produce order and clarity. Sherry in his presentation goes some way towards accomplishing that. He gives participation and himself an air of credibility, and reassures the audience by producing and acting in anticipated and sanctionable ways. He is fulfilling some of his assumed and expected managerial obligations whilst at the same time restoring the language around participation to the familiar.

Participation and Company Discourse

The reader should be aware that this does not exhaust the ways in which the language of participation is recuperated to the familiar discourse that habituates the company. The reader can refer back to those other early associations developed between participation and terms like 'communication', 'involvement', 'discussions' and so on to appreciate the blooming texture of meanings that relates the language of participation to one that is more familiar. It should also be noted that there was a recurring motif in which management quite explicitly asserted that participation does not entail a divergence from 'normal channels'. Participation was said to be still a part of those established relations and mode of discourse between successive supervisory levels. The normal channels of communication were said to still obtain. On some occasions that in itself was presented as form of participation. On

others it was seen at least as not running counter to the purposes of participation. Even the formal grievance procedure was considered as an appropriate stable companion for participation. The language surrounding the grievance procedure has already been referenced and displays some features that one would have thought would not reside happily with some of the espoused and more usual language of participation.

An Open End

The texture(s) considered in this section should not be taken as complete, final or absolute. From preceding sections the reader will be aware of further appliques and threads that have not received treatment here. It is in the nature of emergent processual meanings that they do not readily comply to this sort of treatment. Even if I had more time and space available, the task of unpicking the whole texture would prove most daunting, if not impossible. Neither multi-variate analysis nor comprehensive naturalistic, or even imaginative, description can adequately represent the subtleties and complexities of meanings developed in this type of situation. What I hope I have done is to highlight once again some of the more salient portions of the texture. Some features of it that appeared to be more impactful and resiliant to changing circumstances. In this way they may be said to be somewhat thematic. I hope also that I have demonstrated the relationship between these texture(s), ideology and rhetoric. As textures they describe a specific space: one that excludes other textures and that creates boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. There are established and encouraged relationships that direct and influence potential audiences and participants.

CHAPTER 4

POSITIONS

In an earlier section I referred to the importance of the Managing Director's formal presentation for the definitional process at Tridy. This was not least the case because, for almost the first time, he provided a cohesive and ordered frame for the whole project. He put forward a cogent definition that rescued others from their inability to locate participation within a relevant discourse. In this way he could be said to have been providing a meta-perspective. Not only was he presenting specific definitions of participation in pursuasive ways, he was also providing the means by which others could come to define and talk about participation. He was, in other words, providing a definitional frame; the means with which to order and locate their own definitions within a particular meaningful discourse. Many of the audience had been unable to conjure their own coherent definition, and many remained in a definitional vacuum. Others were aware of various disparate relations around participation but still found the term amorphous, they were unable to locate it in a familiar discourse. Such a location would provide them with a position of intelligibility from which the text(ures) around participation would make more sense. Sherry gave them an overview that could be used to relate other portions of the texture and bind them together. He gave them a palatable position of intelligibility. He created a dominant and familiar discursive location for the language of participation by relating participation to a formal representation of what was taken to be the existing organisational arrangement of the company. In this section I want to further explore some of these processes of providing positions of intelligibility for others, these ways of positioning the

audience and of providing definitional frames.

Let us begin with a bold aphorism: discourse is constitutive of subjectivity; subjectivity is itself a discursive construct. This is part of the decentering logic that is part of a growing movement impelled by a corpus of work that begins perhaps with Marx, Freud and Nietzsche and is taken up more recently by the likes of Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and Althusser. In its various guises it speaks of the 'Death of the Author', of structure without a centre or origin, the splitting of consciousness, the demise of the metaphysics of presence, of history not directed by the actions of individual consciousnesses, and so on. It is a movement still struggling with itself; the implications not yet fully formed; its direction still obscure; without cohesion and far from being ascribable to a discipline. Its postures require new positions of evaluation, of method and discipline, since it throws existing conceptions into doubt.

One can enter this murky trail at a simple point by suggesting in the first place the rather non-contentious view that the meaning of a given sentence gets its value from its position in a particular discourse, and further, that its participation in varying discourses will give it different meanings. The extent to which an individual subject (as hearer) participates in any of these discourses will enable him to adopt a position of intelligibility by which a 'reading' can be achieved and specific meanings garnered. Thus, in a sense, the subject finds meaning by the positions she is able to adapt in relation to these discourses. This includes meanings about, and in relation to <u>herself</u>. The subject finds herself, too, by the positions adopted in relation to these discourses. A subjectivity is dispersed across a range of discourses. <u>A</u> subject arises when

the plurality of meanings is closed off and a particular position is taken up that focuses meaning and fixes it (temporarily). It is not the plurality of language that is a function of the actions of subjective consciousness (since that plurality is the true nature of language itself), if anything it is the fixity of meaning that is achieved. The very plurality of language offers a range of meanings, which together with the potential relationships and their clashes and amalgamations, creates the possibilities of sense, and at the same time provides the possible positions of intelligibility that are constitutive of a subject.

'I think....'; 'I am a....'. We describe ourselves. We are all describers of ourselves as ideologues: 'I am a feminist'; 'I believe in the scientific method'; 'I take the premise of primogeniture to be true and natural.' There are regions of discourse here, a proliferation of meanings that allow certain positions for a subject. We locate ourselves in those discourses or are so located by others. Despite the variety there is an apparent compulsion to concur still with the dominant ideology of 'selfhood'. We all seem to enter that discourse where, and by which, we assert our status as autonomous, stable and unique individuals. All and any evidence to the contrary is scrupulously elided. Contradictions in our thought, our ways of being, are eluded,denied or reflexively dealt with by interposing mood, insanity or curios such as 'I'm not feeling myself today', in ways that ultimately only serve to reaffirm our selfhood. We resemble living narrators; we are like classic realist novellas: desperately trying to present credible and consistent characters, ordered and consistent plot and theme. Giving-off the impression of things as they are; a coherent message (of self) that continues through to the end. Like the realist text, we smooth over those inevitable contradictions, omissions and inconsistencies. Some of

us even portray ourselves as fictional characters; as Cagney, as Anna Karenina, as Smiley, as Priam, as Superman, as the girls in the Martini adverts, as the man in the St. Bruno adverts, as Brando in 'The Last Tango in Paris', as the 'Spiders from Mars' ... not many as Godot though, not often as Godot.

It is language itself that provides the possibility of subjectivity. We might want to follow Althusser (1971. p. 161) and maintain that the sense of unique subjective individuality is the 'elementary ideological effect'. There is little in our discourse that is presented and taken as more natural than the idea of self as stable entity. But, more fundamentally, as with the determination of all meaning, selves are verbal relations of difference: 'I am not like De Sade'; 'I am like Sister Theresa'; 'my girlfriend says I look similar to Robert Donat'; 'My husband says I look nothing like Candice Bergen'; 'My boss told me that my work was not as meticulous as Joe's'.

At a still more basic level, language provides the opportunity of saying 'I', of making ourselves the subject of the sentences we speak and write. The 'I' constitutes an immediate relation of difference: 'I' - 'not-I' - 'you'. The 'I' of the sentence need not be extrapolated beyond the sentence. What is to say that the 'I' of one sentence corresponds exactly to the 'I' of the next? Indeed, isn't our experience, upon a moment's reflection, simply the counter of that, on numerous occasions. The repetition is not a pure repetition but a contingent one. The 'I's' are situated in discourses, they are produced and reproduced (if at all) in contexts. Language is a system of differences without positive terms - the 'I' only belongs to a specific discourse and a particular contextual establishment of relations (of difference). The 'I' too, obtains its meaning from its use. This does not deny the possibility of the existence of

a physical body with 'eyes' and noses, that is more or less stable over time (foregoing the issue of decay). But the meaning of that, its status as subject, is solely the province of language - a body with 'I's' is a linguistic construction. Derrida:

> (of Saussure).."'language (which consists only of differences) is not a function of the speaking subject.' This implies that the subject (self identical or even conscious of self-identity, self-conscious) is inscribed in the language, that he is a 'function' of the language. He becomes a speaking subject only by conforming his speech... to the system of linguistic prescriptions taken as the system of differences." (1973. pp.145-6)

When Barthes kills the author, he, too, is asserting the primacy of language - it is language that speaks, that conveys meaning - not the author, not the subject. The subject is not a unitary, autonomous entity; it is, as Silverman and Torode (1980) put it, a 'textual movement', a plurality of various positions in various discourses, only marked temporarily in this text by the 'I' written there. Or as Barthes has it; "...language knows a subject not a 'person' and this subject is empty outside of every enunciation which defines it... 'I' is nothing other than the sentence (in the text) saying 'I'." (1975:1973 - 'The Pleasure of the Text')

An important feature of this conception of the subject that I want to expand and use (misuse) owes something to the contribution of Lacan. He asserts that the individual recognises itself by virtue of a series of positions; 'subject-positions'. I want to interpret this to imply that various 'subject positions' situate individuals in discourses, giving them a vantage point from which the discourse or some portion of it, becomes intelligible. Thus again the subject is realised as dispersed across discourses, it is a plurality constituted by its entrance into positions of intelligibility in relation to those various discourses. The subject can no

longer be thought of as a static entity, stable over time; rather the subject is always in process. (This allows the possibility of real change, indeed makes it inevitable, something which the rhetoric of the dominant ideology seeks to deny.)

The intercession of ideology here is crucial. Modes of reading become habitual/conventional and appear as natural rather than constructed and arbitrary - that is to say, ideology sanctions, and at the same time reaffirms itself by, the establishment of specific subject positions in given discourses. It is claimed that there is a primary ideological movement that posits subject positions that situates the reader-hearer as a comsumerist and passive recipient of messages emitted with perfect clarity and fidelity. In this way the author is once again privileged. In so positioning the audience, the author is able to foreclose on possible meanings and locks the audience into a passive reception of provided meanings. But these subject positions are not natural functions of the text as such, immutably and irretrievably fixed there. There is a required rhetorical, not to say social, effort to project the subject into those positions that are deemed ideologically sound and appropriate. One might be forced to say that there is, after all, a choice. But once more the choice is related to the availability of known discourses: the choice is thus itself ideological. It becomes a matter of ideological contrivance (or choice) to accept those positions and those readings that are made to seem obvious and 'right'.

These broad notions can be related to such things as the established (sic) and ideological positions of the workplace or other commonplace arenas of human endeavour. Thus in the workplace one might expect to find such broad and obvious subject positions as 'worker-manager' as an established arrangement of difference.

Others might be 'employer-employee', 'supervisor-subordinate', even 'teacher-student'. The relations of difference here are clearly over-simplified. Such positions of difference would act as other linguistic items: there would be a complex texture of relationships. In context they would appear in syntagmatic relation, as it were, with some items and be in a paradigmatic relation with others. There is no necessary centre to the structure, and no boundary; at least not in theory. The extent would be limited by the range of discourses among which the relationships are distributed. Positions of difference operate as all other linguistic items and accrue meaning in the same manner, for they are nothing other than linguistic items. They appear in context and are bounded only by the discourse(s) in play at the time.

Particular subject positions are both engendered by the ideology of the workplace, ripe for allocation or invocation, and, of course, are there as a means of perpetuating that ideology. The range of discourses circulating within the particular organisation require these certain subject positions. A discourse of company structure that talks in hierarchical terms engenders subject positions of 'superior and subordinate', for instance. At the same time the discourses are intelligible by individuals adopting those various subject positions. There is a sharedness and a difference in the positions. There is a shared knowledge of the discourse that gives rise to the subject positions, but the discourse is differentially intelligible from within those different subject-positions. The discourse of, say, wage bargaining is differentially intelligible from the positions of 'trade-union negotiator' and from that of 'personnel representative'. Quite different again from the position of 'participant observer'. There must be some mutuality with respect to overriding discourse that creates the very possibility of

the attendant subject positions, but they are positions of difference that allow different positions of intelligibility.

From these subject positions, too, the mode and point of entry into the discourse is controlled, and to them adhere certain obligations and consequences. The range of subject-positions apparent has an intimate relationship to the range of possible discourses that may be engaged in. Ideologically grounded discourses ensure a finite range of possible meanings and ways of reading. At least it is part of the function of ideology to so limit by giving authority and approval to particular modes of discourse and consequently particular subject-positions.

Barthes and others have demonstrated how in the classic realist texts of literature the possibility of various positions of intelligibility are closed off. Within the text, the competing voices engendered by characterisation and plot are tamed by a movement which creates a hierarchy of discourses with one, or a congruence of a number, being privileged. The text moves towards a point where that privileged position is revealed to, and shared with the reader; there is a coincidence between the privileged discourse as presented by the author and/or main character (or narrator) and the position of intelligibility provided for the reader. The reader is then nicely placed as an open recipient of the author's message contained in the discourse. At this point the text is effectively closed, the meaning, a meaning, given and stabilised and the ideology reaffirmed. The effectiveness of the ideology to reveal the truth and speak of reality has been championed by the readers ability to adopt the provided position of intelligibility. Reflexively, by having his reading ratified and affirmed, the reader has his position as an autonomous, intelligent meaning-giver reasserted.

To reiterate to some extent, meaning will vary from one (political) discourse to another. The degree to which the hearer/reader participates in those discourses determines the ability to locate one or more possible reading. Conversely, to be able to sensibly participate in those or any discourse requires that a position of intelligibility be discovered or provided. Words and sentences are intelligible in relation to discourses (or codes). A code or discourse is more or less discrete and stable to the extent that an ideology can establish habitual relations of difference within a relatively enclosed network. In the same way, since the location of words within a given discourse provides a position, then ideology is also responsible for the production and maintenance of habitual, conventional and apparently natural positions of intelligibility. Consider briefly the meaning of company debates at Tridy around some of the issues raised. Firstly from the point of view of the reps. who are privileged to the political discourse of the formal meetings, and the meanings as transformed in relation to those members of the shop-floor who are not. The positions of rep. and non-rep. provide different positions of intelligibility. The ability to engage in, and have access to, the political discourse of the meetings provides the possibility and the need for the adoption of particular positions. Some of these issues will be explored more fully in relation to Tridy shortly.

There is a significant development with the entry of ideology and politics into the question of subjectivity and positions of subjectivity. On a grand scale there appears to be a requirement on the dominant social formation to stabilise and perpetuate the coherent, conscious individual. The dominant formation valorises stability and provides the means to overcome contradictions in the subject. This is perhaps most graphically illustrated at the limits in those mechanisms

of societal inclusion and exclusion. Particularly in relation to the latter where there are mechanisms and institutions for the verbal and actual exclusion of those seemingly fragmented subjects. The insane are castigated and effectively rendered non-persons for the duration of the fragmentation, until the person can be made 'whole' again. Hallucinagenics are controlled and debarred: criminals are incarcerated. On a more mundane scale, too, there are attempts to ensure continued involvement with the dominant formation in an acceptable manner. Society needs coherent and stable individuals. There is a desire to position individuals in ordered and repetitive ways. Such positionings not only stem from the ideological imperative of the dominant social formation, they are also supportive and affirmative of that formation. Society creates not only individuals per se, but particular types of individuals and the means by which self and other recognition and labelling can be achieved.

Traditional sociological texts, like many other forms of text, also conspire to deny the productivity of language and the plurality of meaning. This is again partially accomplished by a positioning of the reader. The text is not presented as a site of productivity, but as a closed, competent and authoritative statement. The position of the reader is one of passive receiver of the provided wisdom. The meanings in the text are not 'up for grabs'. The reader can only reject or accept the 'facts' or the version on offer; there is no encouragement to see a field of play in which he can participate in the creation of fresh meanings. Meaning is again closed-off - presented as unitary, ordered and final.

A truly social critical practice should decry the delivery of a single unitary meaning. It should seek to discover and display the plurality of meanings inherent in the discourse(s) under review

(and also in its own text, as it delivers itself: an act requiring a constant reflexivity). In addition it should also reject and unsettle 'obvious' and directed positions of intelligibility. Even as it presents its own text it should eschew the stance of pseudo-dominance in relation to its understanding of the phenomena, and its claims to privileged access to meaning. However, a social (as opposed to a purely literary) critical practice, should also recognise the realisation and imposition of specific and 'obvious' positions of intelligibility in actual everyday discourse - and, of course, be aware of the ideological imperative beneath it, and the means by which that is achieved. Speakers will attempt to create fixed position of intelligibility for their audiences; to lock them into particular ways of hearing that are receptive to the message and meanings being proffered by the speaker. What these positions are and how they are achieved, should be of interest to the social critic. Speakers, most generally, will attempt to present themselves as authoritative transmitters of unambiguous sense. They will attempt to position the audience to accept their message passively as real and correct - as the meaning - foreclosing on too much equivocation.

Positionality becomes to a degree institutionalised. In institutional settings there will be a continued employment of positional strategies which reflect existing ideological and power arrangements apparent in the language community. To take the example of educational institutions. Teachers will attempt, in their linguistic presentation and in other ways, to perpetuate and reaffirm the 'teacher-pupil' relationship by a myriad strategies that position the hearer as 'pupil', thus effectively closing-off possibilities of a form of discourse developing in which the relationship is reversed, or in which other, unseemly and nefarious or threatening relationships might

develop. Similarly, one might suggest, managers will attempt to control discourse in ways that positions shop-floor personnel as employees and retain the relationship 'superior-subordinate', with all that might entail. In both these cases the positions of difference engendered confers certain expectancies, rights and obligations. Positioned as pupil, that individual will expect to receive knowledge and fact from the other as teacher. The teacher assumes the right and will attempt to convey an unequivocal message to the hearer. The position of intelligibility for the subordinate is similarly constrained.

These positions and relations are not natural and immutable. There is no necessity that a pupil always be positioned as dupe. The teacher must continue to do considerable interactional work if the relationship is to be retained. The correct position of intelligibility must be constantly re-created. Indeed, the fact of interaction implies that in most situations there will be counter efforts to shift the positioning. That person who perceives herself being positioned as passive recipient of a superior's message, may wish to counter with a move to assert her own superiority and to question the provided wisdom and represent the truth in her own version. In interaction there is always the possibility of negotiating positions.

More often, perhaps, a dialectic is established in which the language of the superior-subordinate relationship ('manager-worker', say) is marshalled to maintain that asymetrical relationship, whilst at the same time, the existence/recognition of that relationship is enabling of a form of language that perpetuates it. Such moves function to encamp the hearer in specific positions of intelligibility, and to accept those positions as natural and obvious. It is the aspiration of an ideological rhetoric to achieve that naturalness. The position of the passive subordinate destined to accept the provided

wisdom of her superiors is made to seem natural by the rhetoric and ideology that supports hierarchical structures and the rightness of unilateral decision-making. The strategy operates reflexively, since the given/adopted position of intelligibility offers the possibility of renewed recognition (misrecognition) of that which the person already knows. The positioning of the subject allows/forces an acceptance of, and a perspective on, the spoken, in ways that are already wholly familiar and known. The positioning of the subject is enabling of a certain intelligibility of the spoken and the easy and obvious achievement of intelligibility reinforces the correctness and appropriateness of the positioning. From another tack one might say that the position given/adopted provides an access to a particular discourse or language code in which the myths and signifying systems are allowed to represent experience in ways that it is conventionally articulated in that society (or in that language community).

The social critic might explore these positioning practices. He can question the 'obvious' positions of intelligibility presented; and should indeed, question his own positions of intelligibility and attempt to make them manifold rather than unitary. The social critic should actively seek out the processes of production of the text and the organisation of its various discourses. He should also remain aware of the possibility of escaping the confines of allocated positions on the part of the reader/hearer. As already indicated, positionality is arbitrary and not immutable; it is open to negotiation. Despite the force of the rhetoric and the strength of the conventionality of prescribed positions, it is always feasible to reject positions and to seek out fresh ones. One may also engage in counter positioning strategies that attempt to locate other. One may further

position oneself in such a way that the other's acceptance of that position automatically obliges him to enter a position of inter-dependence.

The very plurality of language, when it is recognised and accepted, offers the possibility of change - or at least a way beyond the tyranny of closed and unitary meaning. The realisation of the availability of alternative positions of intelligibility, and the potential to reject consigned positions has a liberatory effect. The subject is theoretically able to reject the positioning of others and to construct his own. The question of the need to realise the existence of the positioning strategies of others and to be able to visualise credible and manageable alternatives has already been addressed to some extent. Some positionings have become so conventional and institutionalised, that they are barely questioned. They are taken for granted and viewed as more or less natural. There is a passive collusion of those so positioned that accepts and supports the relationships. The central discourses of the dominant social formation are said to be comprehendable from within those positions and the fact that understanding is readily and obviously achieved is immediately supportive of the social formation. It is probable that it is these types of positions that are the most difficult to break down. The very possibility of perceiving likely alternatives is severely restricted.

Positionality is another integral part of the attempt to close off meaning. In this instance it is not an attempt to directly bound the play of signifiers and the relations they form, it is rather an attempt to bind the reader/bearer; the other, into particular sites of understanding. Positionality cannot be divorced from the notions of the rhetorical closure of meanings, and the boundaries of discourse, but it helps to make an analytic distinction. There are in a sense

two versions of positioning. There is the positioning of alter in relation to ego. And there is the positioning of alter in relation to the text or the discourse. However the distinction is partly illusory; especially when one recalls that the subject is a discursive construct in the first instance. Ego's identity is a function of the position(s) in the text that are occupied and presented. Ego is identified and is identifiable as a relation of verbal difference present in the discourse. Although non-verbal signs may also serve to allocate ego to certain positions of difference. There might be, for instance, a signifying power in fashion. I do not want to pursue the signifying possibilities of such non-verbal signs at this point. The point is that ego is made manifest and meaningful by these relations of difference whether they are established in a linguistic or a non-linguistic code. (Besides there is probably a point at which non-linguistic significations enter the linguistic to obtain full meaning potential.)

To pursue the distinction however. In the first case, ego represents his own position in relation to the text and/or to alter in such a way that alter is guided to adopt a specific position of intelligibility on the strength of that presented relationship. At its crudest one might point out that if ego presents himself as 'author' in relation to the text, then alter is almost forced to assume the position of reader. However I would want to deny that that reciprocal relationship is natural or necessary. Such movements invariably depend upon the conventionality of various relations of positional difference. That is, there is usually an ideological backdrop to the re-establishment of such relations. It is here that those workplace relations of the dominant social formation have their ground: manager-worker; superior-subordinate and so on.

In the second case the centrality of discourse for positionality is more obvious. To take the most apparent example of the reader of a piece of literature. The text will most likely display a variety of discourses arranged hierarchically with some more privileged than others in relation to their assumed ability to speak about truth and reality. The text creates a position of intelligibility for the reader whereby he is able to approach those domains of discourse that are said to represent reality. In a large number of cases the privileged discourse is said to be owned by the author or a representative of the author in the form of absent narrator or present character (or both). The reader is encouraged in various ways to come firstly to accept the dominance of the privileged discourse and secondly to acknowledge its veracity. The way this is accomplished is of course the question at hand.

The first and most forceful means by which that is accomplished is by the exploitation of the shared ideology that privileges the author and grants him filial rights over the text and the meaning(s) in the text. In more general terms, the speaker or ego partakes of that taken for granted, but ideological assumption, that he that speaks (or writes) knows what he speaks and is the final arbiter of the meaning of what he speaks. The specific point is that certain members of the company can be seen as the authors of the 'text of participation' both literally in some instances - as in the creation and distribution of formal documents germane to participation - and more figurally. The author(s) then establish themselves in the text as author and thereby as holder of the meaning of the text and imparter of that meaning to the (passive) audience. As authors the management group at Tridy establish and privilege a particular discourse in relation to participation. As authors they are held to be themselves in a privileged position in relation to that discourse.

The appearance of that discourse within the textures of meaning signals a relationship to these authorial figures who are the arbiters and guarantors of the meaning(s) of the discourse. To the audience the discourse implies an author, or authors, of the discourse, together with the rights that authors habitually possess. That is, the reader/hearer comes to recognise the particular privileged discourse in the text and to identify with it. That discourse is assumed to have an authorship, and the author is assumed to have the power to speak the truth and give meaning. The reader/hearer thus comes to identify with the author's voice in the text.

The audience also comes to identify with the privileged discourse because it displays a discursive familiarity. In the simplest terms, from the competing, and sometimes contradictory discourses of a text, the reader is most likely to identify with that discourse that is familiar and recognisable. An important feature of familiarity is that it should provide that comforting ground where one knows that it has spoken in recognisable and intelligible ways in the past. That type of discourse that the reader can recognise as having worked and proved useful on other occasions. Thus, for example, a management discourse that relates participation to the existing company talk about formal hierarchical structures becomes recognisable and privileged because it is discursively familiar. That familiar company talk of structure is at least partially known and has been a demonstrably successful way of talking in the past. It holds open the promise of understanding again. The hearer can find a position of intelligibility in that discourse - it gives him a way of talking and of understanding. And it offers success. The very familiarity enables the hearer to engage the discourse and that ability and his capacity now to speak of participation serves once again to reaffirm the appropriateness of that traditional discourse on company structure.

The rhetoric of the various textures of meaning developed by management each offer to the audience domains of familiar discourse and concomitant positions of intelligibility within those discourses. There will be varying degrees of familiarity vis-a-vis the audience and different sections of it. The scientific texture may operate from a discourse that is less familiar to some sections of the workforce than to others, and less familiar than say the texture that relates participation to representational democracy. It is the function of rhetoric and ideology to make those less familiar discourses appear more familiar. Thus the scientific discourse does not become rigorous or sapiental - indeed it is barely scientific at all - it is the rhetoric that makes it appear both scientific and familiar at the same time. The scientific discourse here does not aim to give a position of intelligibility that is itself formally and critically scientific. It moves the hearer to adopt a position as layman, but as sympathetic and awestruck layman. It exploits those points in the general language where the discourse of science enters the common discourse of everyday life. It wants the status of science without adhering to itself the rigour and critical perspective that might normally accompany it. A formal scientific discourse would fail probably to achieve the discursive familiarity required and would not offer to the hearer a suitable position of intelligibility.

The audience can find positions within all or some of the textures provided in the definitional presentation of participation. The appearance of such an array of textures is at least partly a function of the contextual requirement of different audiences in different situations. As already stated the discursive familiarity of different discourses will vary from one section of the workforce to the other. This means that it will be necessary to promote different discourses

in different contexts, thereby allowing the hearer to locate a plausible and operable position of intelligibility. It is noticeable, for instance, how the presentation of the movement that relates participation to the scientific discourse is most readily visible in the context of manager talking to (junior) manager, and was not so apparent in the context, say, of consultant talking to the shop-floor. Similarly the texture that relates participation to the march of political history and broader socio-legal forces was constructed more often in the interaction between managers and managers, whereas the discourse on political and natural democracy was a more forceful part of the presentation to the shop-floor.

Discourses in this way exploit certain background assumptions about the knowledge and familiarity of the audience. There were assumptions made that the shop-floor would be familiar (and sympathetic) with the discourse that dealt with political democracy and so on. The author, or ego in the interactional sense, must be aware of these background expectancies and construct his presentation accordingly. There is some sense in saying that there should be a degree of matching of rhetorics. The presenter should seek to construct a rhetoric that occupies the same ground as that rhetorically familiar to the audience. The power of the presentational effort will often depend on the success of this process. There was clearly a sense in which the texture around political democracy exploited the assumed shared rhetoric and ideology of common discourse in that area. The rhetorical association between participation and a general representational democracy exploited an ideological position that made the link between political involvement and representation appear as natural and obvious. It clearly had a measure of success as a matching rhetoric, as witnessed by the rapidity with which the association was accepted and taken up, and by the absence of any alternative formulations.

I would assert also that there was a general positional movement that sought to establish the management team (plus consultants) as experts and the shop-floor and other audiences as novices-recipients. This is in part linked with the more general point of claiming ownership and authorship over the generation and dispersal of the discourse on participation. Indeed, as authors the managers become experts in relation to the text; by fiat almost. But more overtly they position themselves as experts in the discourse whilst at the same moment positioning others as laymen. The various textures bolster that approach. The developed discourses whilst offering a degree of familiarity also hint at a deeper more esoteric domain. They have within them the possibility of creating a position of expert who has privileged access to the further reaches of the implied discourse. As managers, those who were responsible for the presentation of participation would be normally expected to be experts on the structure of the company and on matters relating to company policy and the development of the company. They would be expected to have access to, and knowledge of, that portion of the company discourse. The texture that relates participation to the established company hierarchical structure utilises that expectancy. The managers are positioned as experts in relation to that type of discourse whether under normal circumstances or as interpreters of the new structural possibilities engendered by the introduction of participation. More noticeably with the texture around the language of science. Not only did managers' talk attempt to position them as more privileged in relation to that discourse, they were in the fortunate position of being able to offer the alliance of fully accredited and entitled scientific experts in the form of the consultants. Although the discourse that was espoused was only a surface scientific discourse, it clearly intimated at the deeper scientific language of academic and other learned domains.

The surface familiarity serves to draw the audience in, to provide comfort and the perceived possibility of a position of intelligibility. At the same time there is a connoted depth of expert and complicated discourse that keeps the audience at bay. The discourses are familiar at one level but strange and unfathomable at another. The unfathomableness is what allows for the presenter to create for himself a position of privilege in relation to the discourse - to place himself as expert. From this position of privileged understanding and sapiental knowledge, the presenter is regarded as the key to the mysteries of the discourse; as the means to the truth and knowledge of the discourse, to those hidden depths. The audience is positioned as novice; as pure layman; as surface skater. He is capable of understanding since he has some kind of limited position of intelligibility, but only to a degree, on his own. He becomes the pupil that is dependent upon the provided wisdom of the 'expert'.

Consider the relationship between the reps. and their shop-floor members. The reps. attend meetings, talk to senior managers, are given confidential information and so on. They have access to an interactive domain that the rest do not enjoy. More importantly they have come to partake of a different level of discourse. They have their own positions within that discourse just as they do with the more normal discourse of the shop-floor. They act actually and linguistically as interpreters of the discourse on participation as encountered in their dealings as representatives. They are relatively privileged in relation to that discourse and the membership look to them as the providers of wisdom and information - but mostly translation. Once the discourse has been transposed into the everyday language of the shop-floor, the membership cease to be passive recipients of some other mode and can engage the debate as they so wish.

Positioning is pervasive in all interactive situations, however one more illustration would be useful. It concerns the positioning of the reps. themselves by the management and consultancy groups. The reader will recall the various injunctions prior to the early meetings and continuing through them, not to 'get too heated', to not engage in personal attacks, to 'keep things in a low key' and so on. There was also a texture of meaning relating to 'participative style' and to notions of 'sensible discussion', 'reasonable debate', of a 'mature approach to problems'. There is a movement in the discourse here that seeks to position the shop-floor reps. as surrogate managers. They were to behave and converse in ways that were familiar and accredited by management.

Part of the management culture included this sense of 'not rocking the boat' of an evasion of any show of emotion in relation to company affairs; a sense of towing the line and of not being openly hostile or critical towards individuals. The reps. were encouraged by the tone of the talk to identify with that culture and to adopt a position that was compatible with it. Real aggressions and frustrations were supposed to be recast in the form of reasonable and rational debate. The discourse would shift from the subject, to non-human elements of the situation - or from the identifiable individual to some anonymous collectivity or abstract role or position. The reps. were not directly told to adopt this type of position, but the tone of the interactions and the rhetoric edged them towards that position.

Non-verbal features of the situation also contributed to that movement. All meetings were held in management terrain as it were. They were conducted in management offices or in the plush training area. All unfamiliar to the shop-floor, not at all their normal

working environment. Every facet of the meeting situation gave off signs that declared 'management'. After all it is managers who have meetings - that is part of their work routine. Participation meetings would resemble shop-floor conceptions of typical management meetings. There was a secretary taking minutes. There was a boardroom-type table. There were slide shows. A host of paraphenalia that signified a managerial scenario.

People wore suits. They spoke in sober and reasonable-sounding ways. There were agendas and minutes. There were delicate coffee breaks with bourbons and Garribaldi's. There was a whole signifying panorama that set a tone and atmosphere and positioned the reps. within the correct auspices for such a scene. But mostly there was the verbal style and presentation of the managers and consultants. There were relatively overt injunctions to conform to a verbal pattern and a more subtle self presentation that locked the reps. into a reciprocal response.

The reps. began wearing suits (or at least removed their overalls). They conversed in a guarded and restrained manner. They came to exhibit those features of management culture, of good sense, rationality and logic. They did not engage in personalised harrangues or abuse. Issues were depersonalised. Things did stay in a low key. At least initially.

In other contexts of the situation the discourse was so developed as to position the shop-floor representatives as overtly 'privileged' in relation to participation. The expression 'privileged' was actually employed by certain members of the senior management group in relation to the reps. access to the discourse on participation generally and to specific issues. Such a positioning, and such a use of the term, suggests that they are being <u>allowed</u> to take part in a

discourse that is not considered to be normally a legitimate area of their involvement. They are being apportioned a position of intelligibility in relation to a region of discourse that is not normally theirs. Such a positioning achieves a number of things. In the first instance it subtlely marks out areas of discourse as habitually and normally belonging to management. It reaffirms that there is an area of company discourse that is owned, normally, by management; that they have a privileged position in relation to. The very suggestion that the representatives are 'privileged' to have access to, and can participate in such domains, intimates that it is a 'special' domain that ordinarily resides under the auspices of management. In a sense then, it further acts to retrieve and reaffirm management's rights to specific aspects of company discourse; a privilege that is now being carefully extended to certain members of the shop-floor.

Such an attitude is bolstered by significant reminders that the representatives are now in a position where they will be privy to 'confidential' information. Matters of company policy, budgeting, and so on are reaffirmed as residing within a special and bounded company/management discourse. The representatives are cast as privileged exceptions to that exclusivity. On more than one occasion the reps. were asked, and expected, to collude with that exclusivity vis-a-vis their members and to 'respect the confidentiality' of an issue or piece of information.

It is in part a movement of inclusion too. The talk here operates to incorporate the representatives into the sacred sanctity of senior management discourse. This is perhaps particularly important when considered in conjunction with those other movements in the text where the reps. are urged to adopt a style of speech and

and behaviour at meetings that complies with conventional etiquettes of managerial meetings. The use of 'privileged' adds to that sense of attempted incorporation and begins again to justify the conception of management discourse attempting to relocate the reps. as surrogate managers.

It also operates to describe a distance and a difference between the representatives and their members. As it co-opts the reps., it simultaneously excludes the membership. It gives a concrete expression to the burgeoning distance between the two, already engendered by the reps. involvement in new and different discussive areas. As subjects in that discursive arena the reps. are now clearly 'representatives' - a mark that creates a relation of difference to other shop-floor personnel who, in relation to 'representative', are members' - that is 'not-representatives'. The interpolation of 'privileged and the hinted incorporation into managerialness widens that distance and begins to suggest that the reps. are not only 'representatives', but makes clear that they are definitely 'not-members'. Some of the implications of the changes in these relations will be explored in later sections. There are suggestions in other contexts of a move to inculcate a distance between the reps. and the shop-floor membership. The reps. are urged to exhibit a 'responsibility' towards the participation group. I am not suggesting that there was necessarily a management strategy to create any such division in some kind of 'divide-and-rule' tactic. The very employment of terms like 'representative' in the discourse itself naturally creates a certain distance. Furthermore, the dynamics of the group were such that the representatives came to concur with this conception of group identity with an element of exclusion in relation to the membership. In that case, however, it was more a question of group solidarity in the face of management intransigence -

but more of that later.

CHAPTER 5

TIME AND PLACE

Introduction

Thus far this thesis has tended to focus almost exclusively upon purely linguistic acts of signification; but it should be made clear that it is not only words-in-use that possess the potential for meaning. Numerous writers (for e.g. U.Eco 1977; P. Guiraud 1975; and Barthes 1967) have drawn attention to the place of non-linguistic signs within a broad, fully social, semiotics. A sign is not only and simply a linguistic unit. As Saussure says himself; "Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology .." (1974). (For an elaborate account of the 'field' of semiotics see Eco 1977 pp. 9-14, for example.) Even if we want to assert that for something to be meaningful it must ultimately submit to the mode of language, or if we assert that the distinction between thought and language is illusory, it nevertheless remains that language is not always immediately present in acts of human communication in its broadest sense. In other words, the establishment of a series of significant relations - although it might ultimately be mediated through language - can as easily be initiated by non-linguistic signs as linguistic. The distinction is resolvable if we stretch our conception of language to incorporate such non-verbal areas - a claim which is made, for instance, by Julia Kristeva:

> "What semiotics has discovered .. is that the law governing or, if one prefers, the major constraint affecting any social practice lies in the fact that it signifies; i.e. that it is articulated like a language" (Kristeva 1973)

All sign sytems, then, operate in the same manner as language; although whether language is thereby merely a paradigm for other systems or has a more fundamental position, is not clear. However,

that argument need not concern us here. What is clear is that it is not only words that can act as signifiers and form into relations that provide the potential for meaning. One only has to think of road traffic lights to grasp this. The lights operate as sign. The colour of the lights act as signifiers with the concepts of 'stop', 'go' or 'wait' as signifieds. Again the relation is the feature that provides the possibility of meaning. Most importantly, the green light on, only has meaning (in this context) in relation to the absence of the other lights but the known possibility of their presence.

The basic philosophical premise here is, of course, not the sole province of semiotics. It is a basic tenet of the Meadian perspective, for instance, that humans do not respond to the environment as physically given, but to an environment as mediated through symbols. Indeed, in the Meadian analysis physical objects are meaningful only as human constructs, imbued with symbolic significance by their entering into the social affairs of men. It is a fundamental assumption that the distinction between objects in nature and meanings is misplaced. As Perinbanayagam (1974) has it:

> "From such a stance, it follows that whether one is responding to an objective feature in nature, abstract feature in nature, or to other selves as well as to one's own self, one is responding to meanings. In other words, one is always defining situations and responding to such situations - one is condemned, so to speak, to a world of meanings."

Objects in the physical world have symbolic meanings, they enter into and form sign systems that embody relations of difference that provide for the potentiality of meaning. Objects are experienced through meaningful interpretation and construction. From a Pragmatists point of view, for instance, such meanings are contextually determined - and most particularly by the practical concerns of individuals vis-a-vis the object in question.

Taking part, as it does then, in the signifying process, the physical situation and other non-linguistic phenomena can also be taken to operate in the rhetorical mode. It is somewhat artificial to separate the physical domain from the semantic in this regard. It usually makes more sense to conceive of a total situation in which the relation of signs and signifying practices, including the linguistic and the physical, create the possibility of a persuasive image or message. The sense of persuasive here is taken to be extremely broad and does not necessarily imply an intentiaonal effort to direct and influence the audience. Rather it is the case that any particular arrangement of signifiers serves as a discrete selection of options that is far from innocent and free from ideological implications. Each act of signification represents the realisation of optional meaning potential and as such it posits a specific meaning or array of meanings against a paradigmatic background of other possibilities. It is this particularity, this selectivity, that ensures that the signification offers specific relations of difference. There is no true or natural signification, there is no innocent arrangement of signs; thus each realisation perforce operates persuasively. Persuasion is not thereby limited to overt and intentional acts to motivate others to accept ones definition of the situation. Each moment of signification has a persuasive capacity by virtue of its status as signification. It is a signification of something in relation to something else - something different. As Burke, K. (1950) has it:

> "All told, persuasion ranges from the quest for advantage, as in sales promotion or propaganda, through courtship, social etiquette, education and the sermon, to a 'pure form' that delights in the process of appeal for itself alone, without ulterior purpose."

Rhetoric is restored to a natural feature of language and signification in a wider sense; it is not to be thought of as a merely malicious and intentful ornamentation to a true state of affairs. The important thing here is the point that it can be extended beyond the realm of verbalisation to encompass other persuasive significations.

> "...we could observe that even the medical equipment of a doctor's office is not to be judged purely for its diagnostic usefulness, but also has a function in the rhetoric of medicine. Whatever it is as apparatus, it also appeals as imagery."
>
> (Burke, K. 1950. p171)

Having said this, it becomes clear that the range of analysis in relation to the control, impact and rhetoric of the signifying process becomes greatly extended. The range of sign systems or 'codes' (Guiraud, 1975) present in any situation of social activity becomes quite extensive. In addition to the linguistic system proper one might also want to consider para-linguistic contributions for instance (indeed much of psycho-linguistics, to the extent that it contributes to the semiotic enterprises, tends to concentrate on this realm of signification). Or one might want to pay attention to the rhetorical force of gesture, fashion, etiquette, iconography, pictorial and other graphic representation; or the sign systems of architecture, design and environment. In most social situations, some, or all of these features of the signifying process are likely to be present and will be seen to have some impact on the emerging meanings in the situation. Each system will be in some sort of relationship, although it is perhaps a mistake to suggest that their effects always combine to provide some kind of unified message or image. It is an important part of the work on non-verbal communication that often

the signification of gesture or intonation runs counter to the espoused meanings being presented verbally. Clearly, much of this is beyond the scope of this thesis. My research practice was such that details of gesture and other para-linguistic features of the situation were not systematically attended to (although they clearly had some impact of my interpretation of events just as they would for any member who shared in some of the likely significances of such phenomena). I merely wish the reader to be aware of this aspect of the signifying process and to indicate its presence with some examples that were gleaned from the Tridy situation.

Place

In this section particularly I want to examine the importance of two analytic components of situations that have a bearing on the signifying process. In the first instance I shall make reference to aspects of the physical features of the setting. Secondly, I shall be concerned to examine certain temporal features of the setting. Clearly the time tracts and their management may not be said to possess any signifying power of their own, rather they represent a temporal frame for other acts of signification, and their management has important implications for the impact of acts of signification taking place within them. As a part of the total situation, both these features have a place in the signifying and definitional process - and like other aspects of an interactional setting, have a potential rhetorical force and offer the possibility of manipulation and staging for presentational effect. In this sense they can be conceived of as part of the rhetoric available and present in the situation that contributes to the attempted closure on meaning and to the attempt to have particular definitions of the situation accredited and legitimised.

In exploring these features of the signifying process, I draw upon a strand of sociological literature that treats of social life both dramatistically and rhetorically. On both fronts a central text is located in the work of Kenneth Burke (for a cogent review of Burke's contribution to an overtly sociological discourse see Overington, M. 1977). I include in this strand (some of) the work of Goffman, and from the point of view of rhetoric and 'vocabularies of motive', the work of C. Wright Mills (especially Mills 1940). This tradition has a direct bearing upon much that has already been considered in this thesis, but it is to its contribution to the analysis of non-verbal features of the situation that I refer here.

Burke's famous 'pentad', that provides a thematic orientation for any analysis of social action, includes relationships, not only between 'act', 'agent', 'agency' and 'purpose', but also 'scene'. A 'Grammar of Motives' is incomplete without a consideration of the rhetorical features of the place in which social action takes place. Similarly in Goffman's work the concept of 'situation' is given an analytic boundary, and placed within that boundary are the physical properties of the setting as well as other situational properties including the focus of the interaction. Lofland (1976) provides a brief definition of 'situation':

> "... a situation is the social and physical place in which people act; it is the context of their action."

This is especially relevent if we reconsider the motion of the contextual determination of meaning where the context of the situation includes not only (although vitally) the linguistic context, but a broader social context that might be taken to include the physical setting to the degree that it plays a part in the signifying process.

I wish to refer explicitly to three studies that consider such features of 'the situation' from a dramaturgical perspective to illustrate the power of the perspective and the significance of these features for the signifying process. All studies acknowledge a debt to Goffman.

D. Ball (1967) in his illuminating ethnography of abortion clinics explicitly employs Goffman's notion of 'front'. Goffman uses the notion to explore aspects of the presentation of self, but Ball wants to maintain that it is "extendable to the strategems of establishments and institutions as well".

> "Essentially, front consists of those communications which serve to define the situation or performance for the audience; the standardised expressive equipment including the setting, the spatial/physical background items of scenery in the immediate area of the interaction; appearance, the sign-vehicles expressing the performers social status or type; and those expressions which warn of a performer's demeanor, mood, etc., i.e. manner."

Ball examined the manipulation of these dimensions of 'front', including setting to illustrate certain presentational strategies which, for the clinic, served as a 'rhetoric of legitimation'. Legitimation being at least partially achieved by a rhetoric that provides for the impression of naturalness of the signifying relations presented to the audience. In this case the arrangement of the physical features of the setting as signifiers whose relations with each other and with other aspects of the signifying process within the context of the situation and to a wider domain of discourse, appear as natural and appropriate in relation to the purposes of the clinic. The signifiers of the physical setting contribute to the impression that the clinic is a wholly acceptable and natural place for the kinds of activities that take place within it. They also help to situate the clinic within a domain

of recognisable and legitimate medical discourse. They are a part of the total rhetoric that places abortion clinics within the realm of mundane, legitimate and acceptable medical practice. There is a conveyance of the impression of medicalness, professionalism and sobriety. It is Ball's contention that furnishings, lighting, colour scheme etc. are carefully chosen and 'staged' in such a manner that they serve, with other verbal presentational rhetorics and presentational styles, to provide a sense of respectability for their middle-class clients in what, for them, is normally considered a somewhat dubious arena.

A second study that exhibits a certain commonality both of topic and of treatment to that of Ball is the engaging study of gynaecological examinations undertaken by Joan Emerson (1975). Her theoretical interest lies in the precariousness of definitions of the situation and the sustaining of particular definitions of reality under possible threat. As such it serves as a contribution to the definition of the situation literature as such and as a comment on the constructionist theories of Berger and Luckman (1966). The gynaecological examination is taken as a likely situation in which there is definitional precariousness, as such it should prove revealing of the processes involved in the sustaining of reality. An important part of her thesis is that there is a fallacy in assuming that 'definitions of reality were internally congruent' (p.330). Rather, she asserts,

> "...the ordinary may contain not only a dominant definition, but in additiion counter themes opposing or qualifying the dominant definition. Thus several contradictory definitions must be sustained at the same time. Because each element tends to challenge the other elements, such composite definitions of reality are inherently precarious even if the probability of disconfirming events is low."

Such is said to be the case in the gynaecological examination situation.

The dramaturgical aspect of the situation turns on the attempt to present an image that nothing unusual is taking place and to dispel any vestiges of the suggestion that the situation could be defined in sexual or intimate terms. Naturally Emerson pays great attention to the verbalisations of staff members and their individual and collective presentational style "embodied in routinised procedures and demeanor." (p.333). But she also has this to say:

> "The pervasiveness of the medical definition is expressed by indicators that the scene is enacted under medical auspices. The action is located in 'medical space' (hospital or doctor's office). Features of the setting such as divisions of space, decor and equipment are constant reminders that it is indeed 'medical space'. Even background details such as the loudspeaker calling "Dr. Morris. Dr. Armand Morris" serve as evidence for medical reality ... The staff wear medical uniforms, don medical gloves, use medical instruments." (ibid)

Again the physical features of the setting contribute to an association with medicalness and all that connotes for objectivity, professionally focused interest, respectability and even the Hippocratic oath. It is a rhetorical movement that at the same time attempts to exclude any connotations of intimacy, licentiousness, venal interest, personal curiosity and so on.

Pat Carlen in her (?) article "The Staging of Magistrates Justice', focuses similarly on some of the physical and temporal manipulations of settings, again drawing directly on Goffman's conceptualisations. She makes reference to Goffman's observation of the ascription of character by parties to an interaction and seeks to demonstrate how that process can be analytically extended to include features like furniture, 'stage props', 'scenic devices', tacit scheduling programmes, etiquettes of address and ritual:

> "...in short all the paraphenalia of social occasions - are both immediately and documentarily, indexed with consequential social meanings."

Carlen demonstrates how that 'paraphenalia' can be controlled and assembled to convey a particular image, and how those in control can marshall such features to their definitional advantage, and to the disadvantage of others.

Each of these studies vividly illustrate the involvement of the non-linguistic context of situations in the signifying process. The meaning of most social situations is at least potentially affected by the signifying relations of these features. To neglect them totally is to ignore a whole realm of socially significant signs, signs that are employable in the presentation or staging of a particular image or array of meanings. The relations these signs embody can constitute a rhetoric that serves to proffer and maintain particular definitions of the situation. Each of the studies makes much of the 'staging' aspect of these features and their overt manipulation by interested parties. And indeed it might be said that the physical and temporal features of a particular situation are easier to stage and control than, say, verbalisations. They, in that sense, can be seen as a powerful tool in the hands of an aware and strategic dramaturg who wishes to promulgate a particular definition of the situation.

However, this manipulative and intentful staging of a setting is, I feel, overplayed. It would seem unlikely that each doctor or each magistrate would wilfully and consciously pay heed to aspects of his physical surroundings and seek to stage their effects. It is rather the case that these arrangements of the setting are often habitual, conventional and familiar. Indeed it is by virtue of this that they have the rhetorical force that they do have. One might

say that such particular arrangements situate the setting within a common frame of discourse. For instance, the arrangements of a courtroom's physical features, etiquettes of address and modes of fashion, is part of a signifying process that locates the events within some broad legalistic discourse that is prevalent within that society. Just as the oath, the swearing in of the jury, the use of titles like 'your honour' etc. all combine to display their participation within a familiar mode of legalistic and juridical discourse and thus to position the audience in relation to that discourse, so the wigs and capes, the 'dock', the crown emblem and so on, reaffirm the appropriateness of that particular discursive mode. Each element may have specific connotations, but in the historical arrangement of settings like courtrooms, the effect is combinatorial; the purveyance of unified and familiar image. Such settings come to have culturally familiar and habitual meanings. This is not to imply that fixed, stable and immutable meanings naturally inhere in certain physical features, rather that their recurrent appearance in specific relations to other verbal and non-verbal elements, and their association with certain types of social event, foregrounds certain meaning potentialities that become familiar and recognisable. The arrangements and their meanings are not inviolate; on each occasion interactional work is required to sustain the seeming naturalness and sense of the relations. Goffman (see esp. 1967 and 1961) has amply demonstrated the element of collusion exhibited in the preservation of 'situated identities'; people do not habitually seek to disrupt an image of self that is being presented publicly but conspire to allow that identity to be supported in the situation. Similarly people do not often seek to subvert the definition of a situation that is

conventionally proposed - people would not often seek to challenge the arrangements that designate a church as circumscribing particular modes of talk and behaviour. It is more the case that people will recognise the definition being put up and will collude to reconfirm it. Each participant tends to engage in interactional work that sustains the dominant definition. Why this should be so has been less explored than the fact of its occurence. It is certainly an easier option to continue to travel within the familiar modes of discourse. Perhaps more importantly the discursively familiar at least provides a known and comfortable point of engagement in the situation; to simply take part, to engage and thereby to have a measure of influence, it often makes more sense to conform to the boundaries of discourse that others are operating within. But, of course, these boundaries are not rigid constructions and are at least semi-permeable. Definitions and relations are necessarily precarious and subject to transformation and subversion. As Emerson points out, part of that precariousness might stem from the inability of individuals to recognise and interpret the image and the definition on offer and/or by 'participant's incapacity to perform'. That is, that for various reasons individuals may not be able or may inappropriately, engage in the interactional collusive work required to sustain the reality of the situation in desired ways.

To revert back to the central theoretical thrust of this thesis one should be reminded that any text is embedded in a context of situation which contributes to the potential determination of meaning of that text. It should also be remembered that the context of speech is itself a semiotic construct. It is not a hard, fixed reality impinging directly upon individuals in the setting, but is a meaningful construction of relational options. Contexts are not

neutral and empty of significance. A context is a semiotic system, that is, a relation of meaningful signs, and importantly here, not all those signs are encoded in linguistic form (at least not directly). As a semiotic system, the context of a situation again is an expression of a set of choices made from a paradigmatic range of options. A context, then, is a realisation of a particular arrangement of relations. To the extent that certain options are realised recurrently provides for the possibility of recognisable situation types (such as the magistrates courtroom). Features of the physical situation are a part of this context and are therefore a part of the text. As signs, features of the physical setting have a meaning potential in the same way that linguistic items do. It is a potential that is again relational. The significance of white overall in a doctor's surgery is dependent upon its relation to other signifiers in the situation be they verbal or non-verbal; a relation that is syntagmatic. In other words, it is not significant in isolation but only in relation to other elements present. It is also significant paradigmatically; it is in relation to a paradigmatic environment of elements that could have been present, but are not - it is a realised choice from these options. Once again it is rhetoric that makes these realisations, these options appear as natural and obvious rather than arbitrary.

In relation to Tridy then it will be clear that aspects of the wider social scene provide for a context in which the text of participation is embedded. I intend to illustrate some of these notions by reference to some of the physical locations of some of the participation meetings and show how they might be said to have played a part in the total signifying process in which meanings about participation circulated.

The majority of the participation meetings that I attended took place in a conference room located in one of the main buildings on site. This large, five storey building housed largely non-productive functions, including the training area and the main administrative offices. The latter are located on the first floor of the block and consist of an extensive open-plan section. Also to be found on this floor, in separate but adjacent rooms are the offices of the Managing Director and the Director of Production. In one corner, slightly off-set from the main geometry of the general office area, and next door to the Managing Director's office, lies the conference room. The room is capable of accommodating perhaps twenty people around a large centralised table. It has windows covering two sides from ceiling to just below knee-level. A third side is occupied by a modern style 'blackboard'-cum-projection screen. The remaining wall is broken by an adjoining door which leads directly into the Managing Director's office. Furnishings are modern and functional, largely made of synthetic materials. The room is light and airy, although the curtains were often drawn requiring the use of artificial lighting. The floor was carpeted, and the chairs upholstered.

Firstly, the choice of venue is, of itself, of some interest. The choice may have been arbitrary, or subject to bureaucratic contingencies, or it might have been entirely strategic; it does not really matter, the fact that this setting was used as opposed to others may have had some significant consequences. The conference room is some distance from the main production areas in a region where most shop-floor people would only infrequently have recourse to go (other than to pass by on the way to the canteen). Conversely, it is located directly in the domain of many of those senior manage-

ment personnel associated with the scheme; indeed most of them would spend a good deal of time in that setting on other business. Thus, to use a football analogy, management personnel could be said to be playing at home, whilst shop-floor personnel represent the away-team. This fact of location alone, I feel, may have some important implications. Management personnel are operating in a setting with which they are familiar, where they are at relative ease. They are near their home-base, amongst everyday working colleagues and known faces and surroundings. They are within easy reach of their normal operating resources. This contrasts sharply with the shop-floor representatives who are lifted out of their normal operating environment and relocated in one that is largely alien to them. They are isolated from their support groups and from the type of setting they are accustomed to conducting themselves in. We are all aware of the slight feeling of unease we feel in entering an unfamiliar setting, even in the amiable circumstances of entering the home of a friend for the first time.

Quite simply, the shop-floor representatives are not used to settings like the conference room. Their normal sphere of work is positioned in the production areas of the site, a physical setting of an altogether different type. Whereas for management the conference room, and others like it, represents a common working arena. More generally, the shop-floor people are unused to meetings per se, whereas they constitute an integral part of routine managerial activity. A number of shop-floor reps. did register their initial unease at being required to perform in such a setting.

Picture, if you will, Maud (one of the reps.), a woman of advancing years, who has spent a goodly proportion of her working

life in a basement of the same block that houses the conference room, packing and sorting plastic bottles. Her normal working environment consists of a rather dingy section of the plastic bottle production area. The room is dark, with a low ceiling, poor natural lighting and inadequate ventilation. The work area is crammed with cardboard boxes, pieces of old plant and plactic bottles. She works directly with about ten other women, plus a group of men who actually manufacture the bottles and who are situated in a different part of the basement. As a department they are separated in a number of ways; geographically, functionally, from the rest of the production personnel. Maud works in a white overall and white cap.

Despite being naturally quiet, if not a rather shy person, Maud is elected to represent the women of her area. Consequently, one day she finds herself climbing the stairs out of the basement and making her way up two flights of stairs to the office area. She has passed this way many times on her lunch-time trip to the canteen a little higher up, but rarely has had any reason to enter the office area except perhaps to visit the personnel department.

She walks into a large, airy room containing a huge table surrounded by a quantity of vinyl-coated, functional but comfortable looking chairs. On the walls are a couple of rather obscure prints of oil-paintings. The floor is carpeted wall-to-wall. As she glances to the left she notices a 'blackboard', except this one is white and instead of chalk there are coloured fibre tipped sticks. She probably hasn't seen a 'blackboard' since she left school at some tender age. The meanings associated with 'blackboard' are, in all probability for her, quite salutory.

Lounging in seats around the table are three people she has never seen before, each smartly but not over-formally dressed. In

front of her, partially blocking her way, stand two men she vaguely recognises as the Production Director and the Personnel Manager. One is dressed in a green three-piece suit, neatly groomed, clean shaven. The other, a much taller man, is dressed in a subdued grey-green-navy check suit. Both wear collar and tie. They are chatting animatedly as she makes her way to a seat adjacent to someone who is dressed similarly to her; in white overalls. In the corner a young woman sits demurely and with a rather sober expression made worse by a rather severe pair of spectacles. In her hand she grasps two freshly sharpened pencils and a smallish note-pad.

Looking round the room, Maud notices one or two leather briefcases, an attache case and some large buff files. At the far end of the table she sees a small machine that is later identified as a form of projector. No one has said anything to her yet. The room is rapidly filling now. A rather pretty young woman in fashionable jeans and maroon blouse. A middle-aged man in grey slacks and open-necked check shirt. All are seated and the door is shut.

The room is quiet for a moment, and then the personnel manager speaks from the head of the table. He speaks very rapidly. Shortly after he has begun speaking a door behind Maud opens and a man in smart blue suit with a dapper beard walks in whom she recognises as the Managing Director. He walks briskly to the far end of the room clutching a black plastic folder. He now begins to speak. During a pause the projector machine is switched on, the 'blackboard' is illuminated suddenly and is then filled with a series of geometrical shapes divided into sections by different coloured lines. Numerals punctuate the design. The managing director continues to speak, occasionally pointing at the 'blackboard-screen' with a long piece of wood. More figures and tables appear on the screen. She idly

notices that two people in the room are scribbling frantically. The Managing Director stops speaking and makes an exit. She is then handed a number of sheets of paper stapled together; the text is neatly typed and extremely formal looking. There is a knock at the door and a woman in a blue overall wheels in a trolley. On the trolley are numerous cups and saucers, some jugs of milk and coffee. Also on the trolley is a plate with two packets of chocolate cookies...

This rather melodramatic 'sketch' is intended to conjure an atmosphere that might be engendered by an arrangement of physical signs that might be said to correspond to the 'paraphenalia' of management, and may operate to project a rather alienating image to those who are not familiar with it. It is interesting to note that the location of the setting for the formal participation meetings was rarely questioned. There is an element of shop-floor collusion with management by the seeming ready acceptance of the conference room as an entirely appropriate setting. There was no questioning of management's right to control the setting, even though some did express a degree of disquiet. But perhaps this is to underestimate the force of the rhetoric.

The nature and the location of the setting would seem to say to the shop-floor representatives - 'you are now in a management arena!' This is so at the broadest, most obvious level. We might want to assume, with Harre (1979) that a socially meaningful environment has at least a 'course grained' structuring that "consists of distinct and separated areas in space and periods in time, distinguished as the places and times of socially distinct activities." (p193) This perhaps has an obviousness that belies the complexity of the finer arrangement of signs within those designated settings that have the potential to mean variously and that can have a

rhetoric of their own, or that can enhance, detract from, or be in some other relation to the verbal enactments that take place within that setting. The conference room is a space that is marked off and differentiated from other portions of the Tridy environment. It has physical boundaries; doorways that mark it off from the rest of the office space, which itself occupies a space on a particular floor of the building that separates it from the canteen on the floor above and from other functions below. But it also has markers of decor, of furnishing etc., that further delineates it. A person like Maud has to negotiate these boundary crossings and determine what significance they might have. Just what is being so marked off? What is the nature and potential meaning of those spaces she moves through and borders she crosses as she travels from the familiarity of the basement, up the stairs, through the door into the administration offices and on into the conference room?

It is apparent that these different social spaces habitually contain different types of activity. Some are even graphically labelled so as to make clear that other functions are supposed to be undertaken within their confines. Maud knows that the activities that take place within the administration space are of a different kind to those that take place within her basement area. There is a type of work, and there are types of people within that space that are different to those in her own area. This is not a production area - it is not a space in which 'workers' pursue their tasks. There may be 'office workers' and 'office work' in these areas, but it is also known that it is the space where many of the managers operate. Office work in any case is seen as an adjunct to the work of managers; is closer to the work of managers than it is to that of production work.

However, these broad differentiations, whilst undoubtedly apparent and perhaps of greater import than might at first seem the case, only establish the social geography - broad but bounded areas of differentiated social activity with differential rights of passage and controlled accessability. There is a closer focus of analysis.

> "...each area and volume, and each period of time, and each thing within an area and each pattern of action within a time, has a structure which differentiates it from other things and makes it thereby a potential vehicle of significance or meaning. These are the fine-grained structures of the Umwelt ..... we create and maintain such structures and endow them with meaning as a kind of permanent or semi-permanent, bill-board or hoarding upon which certain socially important messages can be 'written'."
>
> (Harre. 1979. p.194)

So the representatives, having already traversed a particular geo-social terrain, crossing several borders as they go, enter the space that is labelled as "conference room (A/I/3) No. I floor, 'A' Block" (that label itself having a particular rhetorical force). The ground has already been marked off by those broad boundaries. The conference room is differentiated from other functional areas, the broadest difference being perhaps 'production - non-production', although in this context the most significant division is in terms of 'management - non-management' space. Within that delineated space of the conference room there are aspects of the physical setting that have the capacity to act as signifiers of finer shades of meaning.

A dominant feature of the conference room is the arrangement of the table and the chairs. The table is very large, filling the centre of the room. It is a particular type of table. It is clearly not simply a desk. Its size and style does not readily suggest a

specific practical purpose related to a physical task. The chairs are arranged all around the table at set intervals, so that they all face into the centre of the table. The table is fairly bare - except for some ashtrays, the overhead projector and some materials deposited upon it by some of the occupants of the room. It is clearly a table that is designed to be sat around so that people can engage each other across its space. Let's leap in and suggest that it is a table that signifies that it is to be 'used' for 'meetings'. This may not be a completely necessary conclusion but attains a force in conjunction with the label 'conference room' and the verbalisations previously that suggested that the activity for which the members had gathered was in fact a 'meeting'. I have already indicated how participation came to be involved in a texture of meaning around the notion of 'meetings' (as a sub-text perhaps of the wider texture of representational democracy). Here the physical features of the setting is in relation to those verbalisations and continues to add strength to that texture.

This basic feature of the room is further in relation to other features of the physical setting. There is a lightness and clean roominess. The furniture is smart but functional in appearance. The decor is subdued - enhanced by one or two unobtrusive prints. The floor is carpeted. The room has an angularity, a symmetry. It is neat, tidy clean and efficient looking. It has a sense of being designed, of being composed. It is more intimate than the more obviously functional offices in the main portion of the administration block and those line management and administration offices adjacent to production areas. It has a higher standard of decor than those. It is less cluttered. It is somewhat less severe and clinical in its decor. It has, what can perhaps be described as a feeling of relaxed

or semi-formality. It is not like a lounge, neither is it like a medical clinic. It is not like the offices on the shop-floor and not like the rest areas of the workforce. These relations of difference begin to mark out its significance.

It is a quiet room. It does not invite ribaldry or horse-play. It has a 'hushing' quality. The sort of place that induces one to lower one's tone when entering - a kind of milder version of the 'entering-church' response. People did begin to talk in a more restrained mode on entering the setting. It is a room that signifies itself as a place where serious and responsible things are done. It encourages behaviour that is respectful, that is restrained and, at least, semi-formal. This, of course, cannot be divorced from the rhetoric that presents 'participation-related' and 'meeting-behaviour' as low-key, sensible, non-aggressive, impersonal, non-confrontational and so on. The verbal text had already drawn attention to these features of 'participation-behaviour'. It was an important part of the management group rhetoric to ensure that 'participation' circulated in the same linguistic realm as 'meetings' and that 'meetings' cohabited with these elements of 'seriousness', 'responsibility', etc. The physical setting now reinforces that signification.

The shop-floor would have some familiarity with the notion of formal business meetings and be aware of some repeated and typical arrangements of physical features in which such events habitually take place. The image of the 'boardroom' has been sufficiently exposed and represented in our culture for its features to be common purchase and for it to stand as the kind of situation type of which I spoke earlier. Indeed, some of the shop-floor representatives already had some experience of similar settings through their involvement in things like health and safety committees. Their everyday

understandings about managerial type meetings, gleaned from the purveyance of certain images via such media as television and from a general heresay that characterises the setting, becomes part of their common stock of knowledge - rather taken for granted and with a typicality that leads to an assumption of commonality from situation to situation. This tacit understanding of the nature of 'committee meetings', together with the rhetorical force of the physical features of the 'conference room' and its associated paraphenalia, combine to provide the possibility of distinctive meanings and expectations when actually entering the meetings. It is not the case that the physical signs of the setting automatically signify specific things, rather that, in combination with other present verbal arrangements, a familiar image is accessed - an image that represents the meetings at Tridy in the conference room as a seemingly recognisable and familiar situation type. As such it makes available, and draws in as legitimate, a particular discursive mode and other signifying practices - in the form of styles of dress, gesture, and of self-presentation, say, that are deemed appropriate in that setting.

I am suggesting that the situation type so identified could be cast in the form of 'management meeting' or 'business meeting' or 'formal meeting'. The discourse domain and the appropriateness of other signifying practices are geared to that expectation - or rather the present signifiers, both verbal and otherwise form an habitual and cultural association with a range of other signifiers that are bounded and could be tagged under the rubric of 'managerial/ formal meeting'. And indeed there appeared to be a ready acceptance of that definition once the reps. had entered the setting. There was a compliance with a 'management ethos' within the setting - certain

standards of behaviour and decorum and particular modes of speaking seemed to hold. What the reps. seemed to hold as knowledge about meetings of that kind, together with the cues provided by the physical features of the setting led to behaviour patterns of politeness, task orientation, an interested demeanor, and an absence of overly expressive behaviour. It should be noted that the atmosphere of sober, responsible and 'low key' behaviour was just what the management group had defined participation meetings to be like in their presentations to the shop-floor at earlier stages. The rhetoric of the setting and the earlier rhetoric are matching and mutually reinforcing. The characterisation of the situation type as that of 'management meeting' is justified by a realisation that the signifying practices engaged in in that setting displayed a similarity with those engaged in in other management settings and other types of management meeting. It is also clear that those practices can be put into a relation of difference to those habitually engaged in by the shop-floor in their work routines and in their normal settings.

The compliance to the expected behaviours within the situation type of 'management meetings' is neatly illustrated by the seeming compulsion of the shop-floor reps. to 'dress for the occasion'. They clearly felt that the situation was significantly different to warrant them taking the trouble of altering their appearance before entering the setting. Many of the reps. removed their overalls and other work clothes. Some of the men began to appear in ties, some even turning up in jackets and suits. In other ways too the style and behaviour of the reps. at the meetings seemed particular to the meetings. There was a recognisable style at the meetings that differed from the style adopted in other work areas (although increasingly they attempted to run their pre- and post-meetings with

their members in similar ways). They appeared to be adopting situation-specific behaviour, the styles of which emanate from some common-stock of knowledge about the nature of meetings and appropriate behaviour therein, reinforced and confirmed by the verbal presentations of the management group, by the signs embodied in the physical setting and by the perceived behaviour of experienced meeting-attenders in the group.

There exist more specific examples of the 'staging' of the physical features of the setting that are of a 'finer graining'. Again, if we return to the example of the above 'sketch' some will become apparent by way of illustration. (The 'sketch' relates imaginatively to those occasions of the managing director's presentation of participation documented earlier to which the reader may also like to refer.)

In that situation certain artefacts were employed to enhance the presentation. From a dramaturgical perspective one might characterise these as props. Among these might be included the 'blackboard', the overhead projector, the use of printed hand-outs, the use of a wooden rod (as blackboard pointer) and so on. Each of these items would doubtless operate as important signifiers in that situation. Each was used exclusively by a member of the management team in conjunction with a certain style and content of presentation in relation to participation.

These again convey a sense of managerialness - this is the 'paraphenalia' of management - a means of the display of managerialness. They serve as markers to differentiate managers from others and to differentiate management tasks and actions from shop-floor. In that capacity they are a simple addition to the broader points and movements of differentiation. They also operate broadly here to identify the meetings as management meetings.

They also have a certain symbolic force that aids in the self-presentation of the manager as 'expert'. They are signifiers that relate to connote scholasticism, intellect, education and sophistication. The overhead projector is a piece of information technology. It has associations of advancement, of technology. It is a modern version of the blackboard. It presents a pictorial image onto a screen intimating television and film - a re-presentation of reality. Its use indicates the manager's mastery of modern technology and sophisticated equipment. The blackboard too has a signification of eduction. I had imagined with Maud that the most likely connotation of blackboard for her would be back into the past and her attendance at school with all that may stir up in her. Both these features, of course, participate directly in some of the positioning movements already indicated. With their connotations of teaching and education they position the managers as teachers, as owners and imparters of the knowledge. They also reciprocally position the reps. as pupils, as learners, as receivers of the wisdom. Again there is a useful matching of the rhetoric. The connoted teacher-pupil relationship may set up associated relations of respect, of superior-subordinate once again.

These physical signifiers may also be said to take part in that rhetorical movement that relates participation to both training and skills; a movement documented in earlier sections. The blackboard, the overhead projector and the handouts serve to convey a sense of instruction; the shop-floor are being instructed (about participation). Again participation is made to relate to something that can be taught. In that instance, the managers are again positioning themselves as 'trainers', able to train the shop-floor how to participate. All this once more returns participation to

management. It is again thoroughly 'owned' by them. They possess participation and are in the position to give it to the shop-floor. Participation becomes something that is given to, or done to the shop-floor by management.

These props also aid the manager to display fully his managerialness - an important organisational and situational requirement. They represent a part of his attempt to present himself as a legitimate, rational, organisationally recognisable 'manager' as opposed to some other category. Part of the meaning of the features as signifiers is to make that point of differentiation - they are a part of a relation of signifiers that create a space of difference that distinguishes and marks out 'manager' from other possible arrangements. As such they represent a portion of a rhetoric that taps into lay members (i.e. non-managerial members) tacit understanding of that discourse and that possible array of signifiers that identifies 'manager', their understandings of what it is to be a manager.

In another instance the production director made a presentation at one of the participation meetings in which he ostensibly explicated the notion of production variances. Again he made heavy use of overhead slides, illustrating his verbal presentation by reference to detailed tables and statistical diagrams. I might suggest that much of the signifying 'work' done by that performance is to be seen, not in terms of the communicational content in relation to production variances, but as a means of demonstrating the managerialness of the production director. One might almost envisage it as a ritual of reaffirmatory differentiation in which he marks out once again his difference from other organisational members, especially from those present in his audience. It also

demonstrates the 'managerialness' of those kinds of issues. They are presentable in that kind of way, requiring the sophisticated presentational techniques used by managers and with the necessary accompaniment of various management paraphenalia such as the overhead projector and the use of diagrams and tabulations. Many of the recipients subsequently expressed varying degrees of bafflement, both about the content of the presentation, but more significantly, about the purpose and need of such a presentation at that juncture (it will be recalled that the issue was placed on the agenda by the production director and its appearance at the meeting was instigated and controlled by him. There was a suggestion made earlier that it was introduced partly to deflect attention from the more sensitive issue of unpaid leave). Some of the reps. were of the opinion that no genuine attempt had been made to actually provide useful information pertaining to the issue - it was viewed rather as a typical management mode of explication, outlined and presented in specifically managerial terms. Once again though, the physical features of the setting can help to support the definition being offered.

Tea and Garibaldi's:

It was a recurrent feature of the participation meetings that at a certain point in the proceedings the meeting would be interrupted by one of the canteen staff bearing a trolley loaded with teapots, milk jugs, cups and saucers and plates of biscuits. Even this little interlude can be seen as adding to the rhetorical force of the setting and the purveyed image. It came to operate ritualistically as a civilising reminder of the nature of the situation and a continuation of a certain connotational force already

established by the verbal and presentational style of management members, and their injunctions to the reps. to behave in a certain mode, and the physical cues of the setting. The tea and biscuits, especially the way they were 'packaged' and presented, and their type, act as signifiers of a certain genteelity, a civilised and sober atmosphere. Whatever had been going on in the meeting, whether there was some form of aggressive confrontation or not, the tea was presented, served and consumed in a specific fashion. It was taken as a stabilizing pause - a chance to re-establish the right atmosphere. Everything stops for tea. It was a shared ritual a re-affirmation of the civility of all present. There is a certain irony in the fact of the tea being served by a member of the canteen staff - a worker - a reminder that the reps. were in a management arena where the relation of manager to worker is transformed into the served and the server. The reps., too, are so served - it operates as an act of inclusion drawing the reps. into the sphere of management. It also is a ritual that posits a visible point of difference between the reps. and the remainder of the workforce.

Time

> "Quid est ergo tempus? Si nemo a me quaerat, scio;
> si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio." St. Augustine.

The control of the temporal features of a situation can be highly significant for the definitional process. I do not here want to indulge in any philosophical argumentation relating to time other than to suggest that at least some of its presence is amenable to the notions of semiotics. Our knowledge of time is also embedded in particular discursive domains, be they Einsteinian physics or University semester systems. There is a philosophical debate which

involves a denial or otherwise of the absoluteness of time. On this perspective the experience of time, like other human experiences, is a relational construct, mediated through its position in particular modes of discourse. As Barthes puts it in relation to the temporal aspects of narrative:

> "... one could say that temporality is only a structural category of narrative (of discourse), just as in language (langue) temporality only exists in the form of a system; from the point of view of narrative, what we call time does not exist, or at least only exists functionally, as an element of a semiotic system....both narrative and language know only a semiotic time, 'true' time being a 'realist', referential illusion...."
>
> (Barthes. 1977)

The logic of seriality is not a necessary logic. Time becomes a feature of the social world that can be invested with particular meanings and the meanings of which are determinable by the relations of difference to the lexical items by which it is talked about.

But more grossly, the sequence of events, their initiation and termination can be controlled and manipulated and structured to suit specific purposes. Temporal features of situations can be harnessed to provide an appropriate frame for the particular signifying practices being enacted within their defined limits. Certain sequencing patterns come to achieve such a naturalness that they take on a virtually incontravertable status. And our capacity to order and sequence events in temporal terms verges on a compulsion. Indeed dividing events into time sequences is one of the most important ways by which we make those events and experiences meaningful. The fact that an action, event or thought can be located within some temporal structure is an important means of our classificatory and knowledge forming ability, as such it is an important element in the emergence of meaning. There is thus again a multi-

plicity of potential meanings associated with the time dimension that can provide us with an exceedingly complex temporal structure that pervades all our affairs:

> "The temporal structure of everyday life confronts me as a facticity with which I must reckon, that is, with which I must try to synchronise my own projects. I encounter time in everyday reality as continuous and finite. All my existence in this world is continuously ordered by its time, is indeed enveloped by it."
>
> (Berger and Luckman. 1966)

Such a temporal structuring exerts a quite exacting influence on people's approach to their escapades. Indeed, there is a supposed logic and force allocated to certain patternings that seem to defy contravention. The notion of a natural-logical sequence, of this type that in common parlance might be characterised as 'first things first' begins to assume the same logical imperative as the law of the excluded middle.

Such temporal organisation is an apparent prerequisite for any concerted human activity. It is also of vital importance in our constructions of reality. For as well as ordering experience and providing a means of classifying event and offering manageable chunks of activity, it also enables us to treat of things in terms of past, present and future. Things gain important significance by reference to these points. Especially as our constructions of present reality depend upon their location within defined and manipulated structures of event sequences and episodes identified and labelled as past and anticipated future. The central significance of temporality for our sense of reality is again touched on by Berger and Luckman:

> "The temporal structure of everyday life not only imposes pre-arranged sequences upon the agenda of any single day but also imposes itself upon my biography as a whole. Within the co-ordinates set by the temporal structure I apprehend both daily 'agenda' and overall biography ... Only within this temporal structure does everyday life retain for me it's accent of reality."
>
> (1966. p.42)

The ascription of temporal structure is one of the practices by which we accomplish mundanely our sense of social order. It is not surprising therefore that this feature has received the attention of the ethnomethodologists. Schegloff and Sacks (1974) have, for instance, dealt with the everyday accomplishment of the boundedness of interactions, how they are divided up into temporarily identifiable chunks. More specifically they have been concerned with the practical achievement of openings and closings of interaction sequences. As a means of constructing and ordering reality temporal considerations are pervasive in social action and the control of temporal features of a situation is an important resource in the determination of meaning in relation to those actions, it is therefore a considerable potential source of power in any situation.

In the preceding section I sought to illustrate how the physical setting and its features constitute an important part of the total situation and how it can be arranged and staged so as to favour a particular definition of the situation as opposed to any others. Place and its artefacts represent one feature that individuals or groups may utilise to enhance their performances; to promote their definitions of reality, to make a credible presentation of self. In this sense, time, although less amenable perhaps to such intense and overt symbolic presentation, represents

another resource that engages the signifying process and is capable of being manipulated.

> "...people in social life perform to immediate or anticipated audiences and that in order to do this, they use all the resources available: the manipulation of objects and space; and even time."
>
> (Perinbanayagam. 1974)

Although in the above I suggested that we invest the temporal structure with an almost deterministic force, I did not wish to imply that the temporal domain is fixed, absolute and non-problematic in its social nature. Time, particularly in relation to social action, is open to interpretation and control just as any other social object is. The attribution of a deterministic force and a fixity is another means of rhetorically provided closure on the potential proliferation of meanings in relation to the temporal features of a situation. Man may be unable to prevent the decay of his fleshy body, but he can decide to retire at sixty instead of sixty-five. A child may not be able to run before it can walk but it is certainly able to exert considerable force over the sequencing of its parents day - and night! There is scope for control and interpretation in the temporal domain, for instance, in such areas as the choice and determination of discrete units (is it a day or a micro-second, and episode or an aeon, an event or a phase?); the sequencing of events; the boundaries of events; the beginnings and the endings, and so on. Given any social situation, control of such temporal features represents a potentially significant sphere of influence and invariably some party to the setting has some such control.

> "In the management of social occasions, time, like place, always belongs to some body or some group."

As Carlen (1976) most radically states.

The delineation of aspects of the temporal structure, its units, its sequencing, its boundaries, again represents a series of choices from options. The meaning of those choices is determined in relation to those potential options and the place of the chosen items in relation to other present items. The division of events into particular bounded units and the verbal or other tags that we represent those features by adds a particular dimension of meaning. The place of those relations within particular and familiar discourses makes them appear as natural and absolute. Thus,in schools, events are divided into meaningful units that are identified by the label of 'lessons'. That is taken as the right, proper and meaningful division of time within much of the schooling situation - event structuring that violates that delineation may be taken as sanctionable.

Time, then, represents a meaningful feature of situations and may be available for parties to use and structure for advantage. I hope to illustrate in what follows some of the ways in which this resource was employed by interested parties in the Tridy context.

In relation to the ordering and sequencing of events and their potential value in the control of situations and their definition, it might be pointed out that at Tridy the overall development of the scheme; its point of initiation; the rate of development and so on, can be interpreted as strategically significant. In the first place one might speculate as to why the company decided to implement such a scheme at that particular point in time. Clearly (as I indicated earlier) there are a variety of espoused reasons relating to the politico-economic and social conditions held to pertain in the wider society and that were said to combine to influence the judgement of certain members of the management hierarchy that the time was right. There had, for instance, been much speculation

with regard to the possibility of government legislation on participative schemes, and part of the company's rhetoric of motives included the desire to forestall any such legislative coercion. There is also an early contact of the consultants and certain members of senior management and the development of a discourse in which participation began to appear more and more firmly. Whatever the espoused motives it is clear that the decision to implement the scheme at such a particular point of time was far from arbitrary - although there was doubtless a certain chanceiness and fortuitousness involved. Even the rhetoric of motives available to us clearly demonstrates that the timing had a strategic quality. Of import here is the realisation that the determination of the temporal imperatives for the implementation of the scheme were established and decided upon by a relatively few members of the senior management personnel. Indeed some of the vital decisions as to the timing were made by very senior managers away from the Pencham site.

However, once initiated there was certainly scope within the Pencham location for control over the rate of development and the sequencing of events. The decisions of where to, and when to develop the scheme on site; which departments were to be included and at what points in time, were firmly located in the hands of senior management (although it should be noted that the consultants were also able to exert a degree of influence in this regard; at times seeking to hold up a headlong rush into a rapid site-wide development, at other times trying to overcome the resistance to expansion by certain sections of the company, the chemical group for instance). The progression of the scheme was the cause of much consternation. Apart from the dynamic between the consultants and senior management just mentioned, there were other problems. The choice of one department rather than another posed teasing questions for those not

included at that point. As the scheme progressed there was increasing pressure from those shop-floor groups who were excluded, and from those groups already included there was pressure for a more rapid development to a site-wide scheme. This reflected a growing frustration with the fact that management were often seen as avoiding crucial issues on the grounds that they were 'site-wide' issues and could therefore not be considered by an isolated work group. Site-wide issues remained the province of senior management in traditional ways. The notion of 'privilege', originally introduced by management as an act of inclusion for the shop-floor representatives became a ground for complaint for those not included. There was a considerable delay in the expansion of the scheme from its initiation in the chemical plant to the next department. Part of this is reflected in a certain resistance on the part of the chemical plant group and its management group. It may also reflect that element of caution and wariness already outlined and indexed by the use of the term 'experiment'. The chemical plant group was termed as an 'experiment', as an exercise, as a 'pilot study' with all that that implies for a testing out and a contingency that allows for the possibility of a retreat to the status quo ante. The labelling of that time tract as 'experiment' is a means of providing a distinctive temporal structuring for that stage of the scheme. Terms like 'experiment' and 'project' have important temporal connotations whose meaning is formed in part by their relation to other items in the syntagm such as scheme, 'exercise' and so on and with items that could have been there but were not, such as, say, 'trial' or 'format'.

The focus of interest is not so much upon the substantive problems arising from the sequencing, but upon the fact that, excepting the influence of the consultants, many of the decisions

relating to the development of the scheme lay in the hands of senior management; and particularly in the hands of the managing director. The introduction of terms like 'experiment' were the responsibility of management and were thereby influential in providing a distinctive temporal structure for the scheme. I am suggesting that the mode of and timing of the implementation of the scheme was of vital interest to all concerned, and that such features have important implications and effects on the subsequent emergence and maintenance of the nature of the scheme. In this regard, however, members who were later encouraged to enter the scheme in a responsible and committed fashion, were not consulted about these important ordering and developmental aspects. The interjection of items like experiment came from a particular interest group and the resulting evaluation of the scheme and its timing that in part follows from that labelling is similarly in the control of a particular group.

The choice of where to extend the scheme next, and when, may well have been strategic, it was certainly a matter of some deliberation. Certain departments may have been included early because their exclusion was held to be a potential source of trouble. Or certain aspects of the developmental sequencing may have been connected directly to the scheme. Consider the situation at party political conferences, where a given number of speakers and a range of issues have to be given the floor at some point in the proceedings. But who speaks first, who precedes who, what issues follow which, what issues are of importance to what sections of the conference? Those with the power to decide such issues have considerable strategic influence.

Such control takes on an even greater significance when one considers the importance of the sequencing of events in one domain of activity in relation to events in other domains. Management

would clearly have a greater insight into the relationship of participation to other policy issues. They would have more information about the inter-relationship of varying domains of activity; they would have had their finger more on the administrative post. It was part of their claimed function to prioritise such domains in the first place. The co-ordination of such domains, being aware of how certain events may impinge upon others, and how that relationship may be strategically and symbolically significant, represents another useful resource. The point is nicely illustrated by a rather trivial example.

An early, rather minor issue raised by the packaging group at a participation meeting concerned the lack of tables in the canteen/restroom of one section in the department. The issue was raised at a full meeting, discussed and action promised. A few days later I attended the local 'reporting-back' meeting of the group who raised the issue on the shop-floor. As we all sat down to discuss the meeting of a few days earlier, and in particular the issue of the tables, a good deal of clattering preceded the arrival of a number of burly men carrying tables. As the consultant said at the time: "Nice timing!"

The control of the temporal features is perhaps best revealed by reference to the main departmental participation meetings. In the first instance there is the question of the actual timing of the meetings. Although at the meetings great show was made of attempts to achieve agreement on the time-tabling of the next meeting, invariably only management diaries were consulted. Indeed, if a representative disclosed that the proposed time clashed with his other activities, it was not considered improper for that shop-floor representative to be asked to miss the following meeting, or for him to simply nominate a replacement. The rhetorical justification being

in terms of bureaucratic efficiency. Similar clashes with management schedules entailed more energetic attempts to accommodate. There was a tacit assumption, usually passively colluded with, that management time was more valuable and that his schedules needed protection. It also is suggestive that the shop-floor workers productive work is of greater value than that of his participation work - indeed participation was not conceived in that way as a normal and legitimate part of the workers day - it was a special dispensation.

It should be made clear that such movements were not always so undirectional. For instance, in the chemical group the meetings were scheduled to fit in with the workers shift times. Time is a social commodity and is thus potentially negotiable. However, another point illustrates the more usual asymmetry. The dates of meetings were never allowed to correspond to managers' days off, although frequently the shop-floor reps. were expected to come in on their days off.

Temporal features of an intra-meeting nature provide some of the most crucial spheres of potential control, and those that became a concrete issue in the developing participation discourse at Tridy. I will seek to examine some of these.

A central issue in this regard stems from the position of the meeting chairman (who was invariably a member of senior management in the early stages at least). The chairman, like most who occupy that position, was able to exercise considerable influence over such things as: the scheduling of meeting events and even events relating to participation outside of the context of the meeting; the sequencing of agenda items; over points of closure, both relating to specific issues and the meeting as a whole; and for the time-tabling of subsequent meetings. In passing it should also be noted that this

issue was compounded by the fact that the managerial staff had control over the construction and distribution of the agenda - both in terms of its physical composition and as editors of the content. Agenda items could, and were, placed in a particular sequence. The reader will recall that on at least one occasion the issue of 3.30 finishing was placed at the end of an agenda thus providing for the possibility of the curtailment of discussion. On other occasions, issues that were considered non-sensitive by management were placed first or early on the agenda, and again issues on which progress could be reported were often itemised first - presumably with some notion of getting the meeting off in the right atmosphere. The reader will again recall the appearance on the agenda of the issue of variances. Placed there by the production director with no prior warning or discussion, many of those others present were of the opinion that the issue had only been put on the agenda to confuse and to deflect attention from the more important and long-standing issue of unpaid leave. Even if such pre-planning failed to adequately predict events, the chairman had sufficient power in situ to re-order the agenda. It was not unknown for the chairman to introduce a fresh, unagendered item at the start of the meeting.

There was, at the early meetings, considerable manoeuvering on the part of the senior managers and,to a lesser degree, the consultants, to compose an agenda. Items for inclusion in the agendas of the first few meetings were very carefully considered. It will be remembered that the consultants had collected a list of issues from the reps. at the 'training session'; there was some agreement reached then, but subsequently the consultants and the senior management members got together to schedule following agendas, structuring the items that were to appear in particular ways. Part of the rhetoric of motivation for this action was in terms of the

desire to avoid confrontation and personalised attacks. There was talk of the need to avoid 'sensitive issues', at least in the early phases. It should be noted that this was part of the presentation of participation to the shop-floor and something upon which there had been a degree of agreement. There had been an injunction from management and from the consultants that participation should not be about confrontation, that it should not involve personalised attacks, and part of that involved treating of issues that were not likely to encounter those problems. For instance, many of the complaints raised by the shop-floor initially concerned the attitude, style and work practices of their supervisors and line managers. There had been accusations of rudeness, incompetence, favouritism, etc. It was urged that issues that had a bearing on this relationship should be avoided or recast in less personalised terms. The construction of the agendas reflected this fact.

The power of termination represents an important display of authority, and in the Tridy context, its barest display occurs at the point of closure of the meeting itself and in the termination of discussion of issues within the meeting. The power to terminate the meeting was formally invested in the chairman, although it was not an entirely unchallengeable right. Meetings, in any case, would have to proceed for at least a minimum vaguely defined length of time before which any attempted termination would be unacceptable. That tacitly agreed and shared length of time becomes a type of rule-in-use whose knowing contravention is a potential source of trouble. However, even as rule, it still allows the chairman a considerable amount of leeway. So that the power to close does exist. I have a conceit that has it as analogous to the sort of symbolic power displayed by the landlord of an English public house. In that instance, disregarding the sequencing of events amongst the variety of his clientele , whatever

points their disparate interactions have reached, whatever their plans and desires; at a certain point in time the landlord can terminate all that social acitivity, dislocate all those interactional patternings. The display of power is symbolised by such rituals as the ringing of a bell (with the added implication that one is being treated as a deck-hand being summoned off-watch by some fearsome ship's captain); hooters going off (perhaps a fateful reminder of the hooter at the factory) or some incomprehensible scripted declamation. The final insult, of course, is that you have been handing over hard cash all evening to the same person who now provides you with the privilege of having this ritual of power differentiation pushed in your face at his night's end. The instances in which the chairman called a closure on issues and on meetings are too numerous to mention; the times when that was done in an apparently strategic manner are less frequent. Particularly in relation to the 3.30 finish issue the reader can rediscover some examples at both levels. Indeed his attempts to close off the issue at the meetings became a point of contention, and on occasion he was not permitted to unilaterally foreclose on the issue or the meeting because of pressure from the reps. supported by the consultants.

The issue of the control of the agenda was one of the points raised by the shop-floor at the review meeting reported earlier. The reps. questioned just how items got onto the agenda; how, and by whom was it designed? They were also of the opinion that issues were being raised by the shop-floor but were not being put on the agenda and were not being discussed. There was a suggestion made that certain issues were being deliberately 'lost'. There was also much criticism of the distribution of the agenda. Indeed, it was the case that at the very first few meetings only the chairman and the

personnel manager got to see the agenda before the meeting itself. The reps., including or most specifically line management reps., came to insist that the agenda be issued to all concerned some time before the meeting. To be forewarned is to be prepared. Management's control of the distribution of the agenda clearly meant that they knew what issues were to be discussed and could prepare in appropriate ways. The shop-floor reps. were coming at issues in the dark.

So, as well as the timing of events and the scheduling of action sequences, a further, potentially manipulative ploy concerns the timing of the dissemination of information. Great consideration can be given to the appropriate time to release pertinent information, and this in relation to the selection of audiences to whom the information is to be released. As Schelling (1956) points out in his essay on bargaining, a public declaration of one's position or aims in a bargaining situation can serve a strategic purpose. For instance, in government negotiations a public declaration at an appropriate time may serve to indicate to one's 'opponents' that certain concessions are thereby ruled out since both parties are able to recognise that the price of backing down - severe and unacceptable loss of face - is too high to contemplate. The importance of such control is not lost on anyone in the political arena. Political history is littered with examples of the skilful timing of information disclosure - perhaps with even more examples of expedient, even devious information withholding. Recent British politics furnishes a small example. Mrs. Thatcher sought to delay the release of details of the North Sea oil revenues since the anticipated scale of such revenues might have had a detrimental effect upon the then current European budgetry negotiations.

Some of the company's influence in this regard relates to the

information released about the development of the scheme overall. The workforce population were only informed of the various staging of the scheme when it was thought appropriate. A particular example of the care taken in the timing in the release of important information relating to the scheme is provided by the 'Briefing Document' issued via departmental managers to the workforce at a point in the extension of the scheme. As reported, that document had the tone of a military campaign memorandum. Its specification of the timing of the disclosure even went so far as to include the command - "Urgent - Commence 0900 hours. 20.10.19--.."

On other occasions, management were in a position where they knew that an issue was of concern to the workforce, or sections of it, and also knew the information that would provide satisfactory solution to that issue. However, they have been known to withhold that information until the issue was actually raised formally at the participation meeting so that answers could be given in that context. They sought to give the impression that relevant information and problem solutions were being obtained through the operations of the participation scheme, and that they, as managers, were playing a positive and constructive role in that scheme. The issue of on-site banking was an example of this. The company had already instigated moves that would result in the provision of banking facilities. However, it became apparent that itwas to become an issue raised by one of the participation groups. Management did not release the information relating to the bank until the issue had been raised at one of the meetings. The information then came to appear as a direct response by management to requests by the shop-floor in the formal setting of the participation scheme. However, the ploy was not always effective. On occasions the shop-floor came to realise, or at least suspect that the opportunity of the resolution of the

difficulty existed prior to its entanglement in the participative system. In such cases both management and the scheme receives negative attributions. In assessing the value and progress of the scheme, a number of the membership came to the opinion that the only successes that could, and were promulgated, were in fact just those issues where the solution was already in hand, where management, for various reasons, had already decided to implement the changes. Participation became a mere supplement, a new tag with which to label the move to these changes.

A related point of contention concerned the distribution of minutes of any participation meeting. From the outset the consultants insisted on the importance of the minutes as part of the means for involving members who were not actually representatives. They pushed strongly for the publication of the minutes as soon as possible after the main meeting. Management hedged on this and tried to retain a delay. The rhetoric of justification here was again in terms of administrative efficiency, but one may speculate on other interpretations. It was certainly the case, as I have already demonstrated, that the minutes were not wholly accurate, or rather that they represented one particular interpretation of events at the meeting. I have already illustrated with a number of cases where the reported events in the minutes did not correspond to my own record of events. The most basic feature of that being the over-emphasis on the contributions of management personnel at the meetings and the very meagre coverage given to the shop-floor reps. There was certainly evidence of editing and careful composition in relation to the minutes. There is a sense in which the minutes were composed to provide a 'company' view - indeed, on occasion, such as the later stages of the 3.30 finish issue, this was overtly the case where the

language of 'the company' came to the fore. The desire to delay in the distribution of the minutes may reflect the perceived need by management to ensure that the minutes were consistent with a 'company' view - that managers in different sections were aware of a common story before general release.

The reps. were also keen to have the minutes out as soon as possible. They were seen as a considerable aid to the reporting back that they had to do to their members. The issue of the minutes was again raised at the 'review meeting'. The representatives particularly made reference to the timing of the distribution of the minutes; they questioned the delay and the possible implications behind that. They secured an agreement that would effectively speed-up the distribution. They also questioned the style of language employed in the minutes. The language was recognisably management language - in some ways not readily accessible to the shop-floor. There was no questioning, however, of the right to control the construction or distribution of the minutes as supposedly authoritative representations of events that took place at the meetings.

The shop-floor had come to challenge some of the management control of certain features of the spatio-temporal arrangements around participation. They had sought for some improvement over the quality of the minutes. They had secured some agreements on the timing of and distribution of the agenda and the minutes. However, there had been no fundamental challenge to the rights of one interested section of the company to control the means of production, and distribution of these important information sources that were significant in attempted definitions of the situation. The right of management to continue to manage that feature of company affairs was colluded with, the reps. seemingly satisfied to exert pressure to convince management that <u>they</u> should make some alterations.

The shop-floor reps. also came to consider the timing of issues as a potentially strategic feature of the situation. They came to give greater consideration to the building of a case, a gathering of the facts and in cases , they sought the agreement of their fellow reps. so that they could present a cohesive front. They would not so readily take an issue from their membership and simply deliver it untrammelled to the managers at the meeting. In some ways they can be seen as more carefully defining the issues, providing boundaries and expected outcomes, so that when they entered the public arena they were less amenable to fundamental reinterpretation by management. The issues became less maleable so that, to an extent, management were less able to reinterpret issues to suit their own purposes.

The active involvement of the middle-management members has some bearing on the temporal features of the situation. Despite encouragement from the consultants, they could not be persuaded to table any issues of their own in the early stages. There was an attitude and a declaration in some cases of "wanting to see how things went first". This may again be connected with the presentation of participation in terms of 'experiment' with all that implies for temporariness and the possibility of a return to the way things were. It was undoubtedly the case in the early stages that the middle-managers were sceptical about the scheme and many suspected that it would not last. There is also a recognition, in their cautiousness, that their position was a vulnerable one if participation were to be taken seriously. Caught in the proverbial cleft stick, many opted for a guarded silence. They began to contribute more positively when it became apparent that participation was not just going to go away. It might also be said that, in most cases, having weathered the expected storm from their subordinates (who had, of course, not been encouraged to go for the throat by the preceding rhetoric) the line-

managers began to see other possibilities in the participation scheme other than the need to defend their own position. There was a growing realisation that they could use participation to address issues that had a bearing on their relationship with their superiors.

Another process issue had to be resolved; this concerned the amount of time allocated to the reps. on the shop-floor for them to have their local meetings with their members. It was problematic since the meetings would be in working time - or as the rhetoric most pointedly has it 'in company time'. That phrase has a significance that its familiarity belies. It is a naked index of a mode of discourse that enables a section of interested members in the company to claim rights of ownership over time in the work setting. Time itself is appropriated by management - it is 'company time', an association that becomes very strong and acquires a meaning by being in relation to other linguistic patterns that contain a language of ownership for numerous features of the work environment, including the proverbial Marxist conception of the class control and ownership of the means of distribution and exchange. Ownership moves in that linguistic space that also demands rights for the owner, and for respect of that which is owned. The new allocation of 'company time' becomes an action by the owner who has the right to bestow that entity - it has the quality of a gift given by the owner to the non-owner. Managers tried to ensure that participation meetings among the shop-floor be undertaken in 'natural breaks', those supposed periods in the flow of time in the work day when company time is temporarily suspended and there is the allowance of 'free time'. This is hardly neutral time, its very boundedness within the surrounds of company time severely curtails the possibilities of the use of that time, and its labelling is restricted - hence terms like 'break'.

The time is not allowed to become something totally other than company time, but merely a brief suspension, a hesitation, within that time. The shop-floor are still made aware that they are not the owners of that time - it is not their time to do with as they please. It does not mark out a fresh time episode with different spatial and linguistic possibilities accruing to it. However, it was not always possible to employ these 'natural breaks' for the purpose of members meetings. It was therefore agreed that they would be allowed to have a meeting directly in 'company time' that would be of twenty minutes duration. Thus these meetings with the status of a dispensation granted out of company time marks them out as other than normal company time. By implication then, participation meetings are not to be thought of by the workforce as a normal part of the working day - they are not a normal aspect of worker's work - they are something other. Normal working time covered by the label of company time does not include time to engage in participation. Participation in this sense at least remains a marginal activity - a supplement to normal work activity and not an integral part of it. This is again apart of the rhetoric that tries to disguise the fact that the presentation of participation contains the two positions of 'participation as new and different' and 'participation as not new, as a mere continuation of existing practices'.

It should be noted, of course, that the management personnel were not confined by such restrictions. Since they are the arbiters of what constitutes company time and the appropriate use of that time, they could position themselves such that their participative activities could not be construed as a contravention of the conventions of company time. In a sense company time is management time, thus management activities are company activities (in the broad sense - this

accepts the hierarchies within the management structure and the arbitration of time use being unequally distributed even within that group.) Broadly speaking participation activity was a legitimate and inclusive use of management time and did not require separating off and allocating to some special time category that is different from company time. In practical terms it means that managers can manage their time and spend as little or as much of it in dealing with participation matters as they wish or as their other obligations allow. They were certainly not constrained to spend only twenty minutes per month discussing participation. Clearly the shop-floor would be able to use other informal times to pursue participation activities, and indeed did so, although the capacity to do so should not be over-estimated. But that does not deflect from the capacity of various parties to differentially define official participation time.

This again illustrates the general point being made in this section about the ubiquity and relevance of control of the temporal structure. Again, too, the sense of control and strategy is something of a misnomer. The division of time, its sense of ownership is not necessarily a malicious manipulation - its very force is a function of its familiarity that aspires to naturalness and its embeddedness in other realms of discursive practice such as the general notion of 'the company', the rights of managers, the sense of workers selling their time, the discourse of ownership and so on. The fact that the shop-floor only gradually became aware of the disparities and the strategic importance of such features, and their early acceptance of management's right to decide on such features is a testament to the force of the underlying ideology that makes such arrangements appear as right and natural.

The reps. increasingly began to sense these things and to experience a sense of the minimal control they had over such a pervasive and integral part of their existence as the planning, scheduling, sequencing, and beginning and ending of their activities. There was a growing and increasingly vocalised sense of frustration and emasculation. The realisation that others have the capacity to exert control over much of ones temporal domain must surely contribute to a sense of powerlessness. It is a realisation of this type of issue that marks the move to a more central confrontation of the power issues within the company. It is the type of disparity and control recognised here; this exercise of symbolic omnipotence where even time is owned by some other, that provides such total institutions as prisons with some of the required means of dominance - the means of creating the grounds for subservience and humiliation that provides the malleable, powerless subjects that are required. Control of the temporal structuration provides another means, ultimately of the signifying process, both directly and indirectly. The definition of time and of persons positions within those semiotically constructed bounds has important implications for the capacity to define reality generally - defining time even helps to define persons, as is most clearly so in the case of the inhabitants of penal institutions.

PART VI

CONTESTING PARTICIPATION

CHAPTER 1

LESIONS

I use the term Lesions to cover those instances that have been referred to variously as, the contradictions, the incoherences, the inconsistencies, in the text. It stands in close relation to the use of 'entame' mentioned earlier. It makes use of its etymological background with the sense of a cut or a bruise, and more specifically the harmful alteration in the tissue of an organ (being aware of the etymological connection between text and tissue). It refers to those points in the text where the rhetoric ultimately fails to paper over inconsistencies, paradoxes and contradictions. Or rather it represents those points in the text where the espoused project, the presented logic, order and coherence of the text is shown to be supported only by the figural and where the figural is inadequate in masking its own purpose. The lesion is (at least) a potential point of damage in the text. It is feasible to enter the cut revealed in the text and to widen it, further exposing the unstable condition at that point. It is a moment of potential attack on the body where harm can be done to its supposed wholeness and goodness. The presented text of participation at Tridy whilst aspiring to a completeness, an ordered coherence, is rather a tenuous fabric of connective tissue loosely bounded and encased in a semi-permeable membrane. That fabric of tissue is sundered at numerous points by lesions that decompose the connectiveness and provide points of damage and exposure. The existence of lesions is taken as a natural consequence of an active language realised in the context of everyday discourse. The very textuality of language in use should lead one to expect such inconsistencies etc. Language is inevitably rhetorical, and an interrogation of a text reveals the figural and decomposes the

espoused rational and ordered logic of the text. Lesions are natural features of the rumbustious playfulness of language. It only represents unhealthy and unnatural damage from the perspective of a supposed inevitable and rightful coherence.

Lesion 1

There is perhaps a central lesion, a fissure, that rips through the whole of the participation text, both in the context of Tridy and elsewhere. It is a lesion that is well recognised and much alluded to in the literature. It is often referred to as a central paradox in the practical discourse on participation. It is an encompassing paradox, the implications of which are revealed most fully in the other lesions in the text.

It is engendered at the point of generation of a participative exercise and the insertion of it into existing arrangements and regions of discourse. In the case of Tridy then, participation is generated as a notion and as a discourse by management (in conjunction with the consultants) and inserted into a discourse of hierarchical arrangements, of power disparity, of unilateralism, control, dominance and coercion. The sense of the lesion is conveyed by the ironic joke of 'by 9.00 on Monday you will participate'. At Tridy the idea of participation did not evolve from an expressed wish or need of the workforce, or as a spontaneous shift to a fresh discourse of participation. It was a notion originating from and nurtured by sections of management for a variety of reasons. Having reached the point of deciding that participation (however defined) should be instigated, they are faced with the problem of its practical implementation.

The language of participation in terms of 'involvement', 'sharing', 'mutuality', 'influence', all of which appear in the early presentation of participation, is undercut by the method of its

realisation and implementation. Participation is 'owned' by management who have already made a decision to attempt to realise it within the company. There is no participation in the point of origination or in the early development. Management are faced with the position of foisting a scheme that is espoused as participative, upon a workforce in ways that are avowedly not participative.

The situation is compounded by the fact that the workforce had not given any active consideration to the idea before it is presented to them. Indeed they have a severely restricted discourse in relation to the term when it is introduced. That further exacerbates the situation since management have, by then, a developed and sophisticated discourse confronted by a vacuum. The workforce display a good deal of apathy, scepticism and suspicion. Partly for the very reason of the underdeveloped nature of their discourse. Partly because they perceive the notion as being owned by management and not by them. It is seen by the shop-floor as simply another management 'game'.

Management, faced with that, and the inherent paradox of the situation may have opted to withdraw the idea. However, the impetus for them was, more than mildly, from perceived external pressures. In a sense the generation of the notion had already in any case taken on a momentum of its own. Certain <u>decisions</u> had already been taken. Support for those decisions and for proceeding was provided by the thinking that, faced for the first time by a notion like participation, and given the underdeveloped discourse, it should be viewed as natural and inevitable that the shop-floor should react with at least bemusement, if not apathy and negativity.

Management then proceed unilaterally to decide to go ahead with the attempt to implement participation. Decisions about meetings,

about possible plans and progress are developed by a management controlled Steering Committee. Participation becomes a management development that then requires presenting and marketing to the workforce. Management act in traditional and unilateral ways with regard to something that is being presented as new and a means of altering those ways of proceeding.

There is an element of paternalism involved here. The company presents itself in talk of 'caring', of 'looking after its people'. In this instance that talk becomes a vocabulary of motive and a vocabulary of justification. 'Participation will be a good thing for the workforce, even if at the moment they don't actually recognise that fact. We are fully justified then, in proceeding to implement our decisions in order to enable them to enjoy the benefits of our benevolent wisdom and foresight.' They are also able to present this fatherly concern as a motive for proceeding unilaterally to introduce the scheme. This leads us to a second, almost sub-lesion.

Lesion 2

Part of the language in which participation is presented to the workforce is couched in terms of this caring - it is being done for the good of the workforce, for their benefit. In other parts of the text participation is associated purely with external pressures. The language of motivation here refers to 'forces' external to the company compelling them to proceed in this matter. (Pressures from the wider society identified as 'social, educational, political, legal' - all of which become involved in another lesion, as we shall see.) The rhetoric is subtle here. The need for participation is said to be derived externally. The company is able to represent itself as being in a relatively healthy and stable state. There is no

internal 'felt need' emanating from dissatisfaction with current practices. The rhetoric here draws upon the professional indices of good industrial practices - low absenteeism, low labour turnover, no industrial action. The company represents the need for change in ways that protect its good name. The second rhetorical movement presents these alien 'forces' as threatening. The company is moving to introduce participation to protect the company, and, of course, its members, from interference from outside. These unwelcome invaders would seek to enforce an arrangement upon the company that is alien to them and potentially against their own best interests. The workforce are asked to collude with that company culture in the face of these 'others' and their meddling. It is not countenanced that such external influence could benefit the workforce. If they aren't of perceived benefit to the 'company' then perforce they can't be of benefit to the workforce - 'we are all members of this community (the company) - a mutually supporting and caring company'. This elides the fact that the workforce are, in any case, having something foisted upon them, the value of which they have not acknowledged.

Lesion 3

The talk that offers a company culture as caring, fatherly and concerned with the interests of the shop-floor, does not generally happily reside with other portions of company discourse. The language of caring, realised frequently in the context of participation, but also present at other points in the company discourse, is embedded in other regions of traditional company discourse, regions that create and support the structures of hierarchy and authority. That part of the discourse is also invaded by a talk that includes coercion, power, control, discipline, punishment and reward. The reader is

referred to that earlier section where the grievance procedure company policy document was discussed. As indicated there, the rhetoric of caring has to cover another language of the power of dismissal, of punishment, warnings, obedience and so on. At other points in the development of the scheme there are contexts in which managers are organisationally required to display a recognisably participational talk - in immediately 'adjacent' contexts their talk continues in habitual and traditional ways. Thus, in a simple example, it was suggested by members of the shop-floor that the behaviour and talk of supervisors had altered in the context of participation meetings, but that back on the floor, the talk reverted to coercion, rudeness and unilateralism. It was possible, it seemed, at certain stages in the development of the scheme to isolate contexts of participation from others. It is the use of those languages that, of course, reflexively creates the contexts. That is, the presence of participative talk creates the context as one of participation. This goes some way towards explaining the disparity between the perception of change in supervisory behaviour by the representatives and by the rest of the shop-floor.

The paternalistic culture of the company that cares, came under attack as the scheme developed and the lesion became revealed and apparent to the workforce representatives. There was a recognition of the unease engendered by a rhetoric that covered the situation where the company presented a language that spoke of 'fairness' and 'caring' and 'protecting' of interests and then proceeded to make binding, non-negotiable, unilateral and, most pertinently, sanctionable decisions about what constituted 'fairness'. This lesion was most readily exposed in relation to the unpaid leave issue.

There was a similar embodiment of this lesion in the context

of the briefing document issued to managers for the relaying of company views on the aims and plans of participation to the work-force. The obviously militaristic tone of that and the blatant attempt to control meaning, did not fit comfortably with the espoused subject matter of the communication.

There are numerous other points in the text where the espoused language of participation collides with that language of management authority, privilege and prerogative. There is not the space to reveal them all here.

Lesion 4

A crucial lesion occurs in the text in those meanings circulatory amongst senior management in the early stages. The personnel documents in particular make repeated reference to participation and management style. It is that texture of meaning where participation is directly related at the individual level to style and skill. Participation is said merely to involve a change or shift in management style. (The wider lesion of meanings of participation presented as purely individualistic, and <u>also</u> in terms of rarefied structure will be considered shortly.) Here the control and focus of participation is retained by management. Participation does not involve everybody directly. It is management who can change. It is management who can become participative. The pattern of movement is thereby established in which participation is <u>done to</u> or <u>given to</u> the shop-floor by management. Participation is a managerial matter, it affects the shop-floor only with regard to the way in which management choose to act towards them.

Lesion 5

Management adopt a language of ownership in relation to participation. It is a language that makes participation a property of management - something possessed by them. The whole language by which participation is referred to is shot through with expressions of ownership and possession. Ownership gives rights and powers. The language of ownership provides the ground for the control of the development of the scheme. It is at the same time the means by which the stake for that control is made. The lesion here clearly has a bearing on the said central paradox of participation as outlined in 'Lesion 1' above. This language of 'our' scheme, of participation recuperated for management runs up against those other espoused relations of participation: mutual involvement, sharedness, openness, a coming together. As owners they assert the right to control over the direction of the scheme, its nature and timing - indeed, its very existence. There are numerous points in the text where the lesion is exposed by the workforce where they make clear that they do not feel that the scheme belongs to them - that it is clearly a management inspired and controlled scheme. This enables the shop-floor to distance themselves from the language of participation and continue with their traditional discourse on industrial relations matters. Management's ownership of the scheme becomes a part of the shop-floor's rhetoric of motives for non-involvement and scepticism.

Lesion 6

Abutting against the above is another where the language of participation is severely undercut by the pervasive and continuing unilateralism of management language and practices in relation to participation. This is again almost a sub-theme of the 'central

paradox' lesion. As an example there is a creation of boundaries around participation, particularly in relation to potential issues. The range of issues that are considered appropriate for inclusion in the exercise are decided unilaterally by management, or are attempted to be so made. The reader will recall the following paragraph from one of the early documents:

> "It is clear that at some stage decisions will be necessary on how far the company is prepared to move on a variety of topics."

Also in relation to the 'site-wide' ploy - the boundaries created by that are decided unilaterally - it is management who decide the criteria that determines whether an issue is site-wide or not, although it becomes increasingly a point of negotiation.

At a stage in the development of the scheme it is made clear that only localised issues, that affect the daily work of members, can be considered suitable for participation. But then the criteria for deciding what actually affects day-to-day work is decided by management. For instance, alterations were made to the canteen arrangements after a group participation meeting. Who is to decide that that won't affect other groups 'daily working life' - it clearly did to some degree. The issue of 3.30 finish was ruled out because it was not a localised issue. Do pay deals not affect individuals in their day-to-day life? Does new plant and thus acquisitions-policy not affect individuals routine work? These relations of day-to-day and site-wide-distant were made to appear natural, fair and obvious. They were in fact the arbitrary, and conventionally unilateral divisions of management.

Lesion 7

Similarly with the language of evaluation in relation to the scheme. The means and criteria of evaluation of the scheme are not participatively shared. The control of the criteria and the means of evaluation is clearly a strongly political point. Discussions about the progress, direction, success and continuance of the scheme would all depend upon the criteria by which it is evaluated and how they are applied. There was very little negotiation as to what both (or all) parties felt these criteria and means should be. Evaluation was retained by management - or rather evaluation that could be decisive (partly because of the 'ownership' issue) was held by management. Other parties did and could have their own criteria and it was at points where these scales of evaluation were in mismatch that the lesion was most fully exposed. Management, relating means of evaluation to the espoused structure of the scheme, would talk of the number of meetings undertaken and the number of issues tackled. The shop-floor would point to the inadequacy of the action taken in relation to those issues. The shop-floor from within their traditional discourse would evaluate in terms of the direct and immediate amelioration of the 'conditions' - issues they 'moaned' about. The management and the reps. would refer to the quality of the dialogue. The shop-floor would not accept 'useful discussions' as an adequate criteria of success. There was a frequent and destructive mismatching. The original point, however, is that the process of evaluation was not devised and conducted in a participative way. It was one of the reasons why parties remained locked in their own areas of discourse. Management's criteria remained interminably vague. Thus all features of the progress of the scheme could, with some repair work, be interpreted in a positive and mutually supportive fashion.

Lesion 8

Much of the language in the participation discourse demanded that participation be considered seriously. It was an important issue. Note its being surrounded by a weighty rhetoric that created relations to history, to science, to politics and to morality. This culminates at specific points in the text where it is urged that only 'serious' issues be submitted to the auspices of the scheme. There was an oft repeated injunction that participation was not a mere 'forum' for 'moans and groans' - for trivial, individual, concretised issues. However, at the same moment, there was an attempt to circumscribe issues at the other end. Issues that the shop-floor certainly deemed as 'serious' and 'non-trivial', such as pay, grading scales, training, were more often than not shut down on - excluded from serious discussion. The injunction should have read 'non-trivial issues and not too serious issues'. Issues that directly impinged on managerial prerogative and authority were often steered away and cast-off limits. The taking seriously of the presentation of non-trivial issues becomes exposed as having most definite limits - limits defined and controlled by management.

Lesion 9

In the early phases there was a pervasive lesion that ran through much of the texture of management's discourse and the presentation of participation. It concerns a complex arrangement of relations that relate participation to parts of the discourse that indexes the espoused culture of the company. This network of relations could be said to contain within itself a number of minor lesions. But the overall sense is conveyed by two identified indexes of the discourse of company culture. There is a perceived natural tension then

between an arrangement of relations around the term 'progressive' and around 'traditional'. There was a language in the early discourse that spoke of participation with extreme caution. The term 'participation' was itself avoided for some time. There was then the language of 'experiment', of 'trial', of 'project' etc. that further conveyed a sense of caution, of reversability, of keeping options open. Participation was caste as a newness and as a potential disruption. It required careful monitoring, a testing out from which one could safely and easily withdraw. On other occasions in the text, participation was associated with inevitable trends in society - trends that the company had the foresight to be aware of and were now acting upon to be in the vanguard of the movement. There is the caution of 'experiment' - there is the urging to take participation seriously, to make a commitment to it. Caution and commitment co-exist.

My decomposition of the phrase 'pilot-project' in an earlier section text captures this tension in the management text. Some of the connotations of that expression draw upon the 'gradualist' and cautious assumptions. Here there are intimations of testing the water - of being in a position to withdraw. There is a conservatism, a rooting in the way things are and the opportunity of a rapid and safe return to the status quo. There are, too, connotations of a courageous move forward, a step into the unknown. A bold and solid 'projection', ahead of everything else, pushing into the future. This is strengthened by the presence in the text of the 'historical inevitability' thesis and the presentation of the company being at the forefront, one step ahead of it - forward looking, progressive.

This is a pervasive and central tension in the text, it enters into many of the other lesions. The traditional, cautious aspect featuring in the gradualist, evolutionary approach and eschews all

revolutionary talk; indeed puts itself into opposition to revolution. The traditional also introduces the talk of formal structure and the retrieval of participation to the established structures of the company. This adds a further complexity in that it entails a further lesion: the sense of structure is in tension with the espoused gradualist/processual approach. Thus traditionalism-conservatism 'generates' portions in the text that themselves don't comfortably inhabit the same linguistic space.

The language of company culture is reflexively re-created and supported here. The discourse of culture is created in these contexts by these usages and relations. The entry of 'traditionalism' and 'progressiveness-modernism' are both reaffirmed by their perceived correct application in the context of the discourse on participation. Both are made to seem appropriate in this new context - the culture is strengthened. At the same moment the talk about participation creates a discourse that allows the generation of these cultural terms. The participation discourse contextually creates (re-creates) the culture.

Lesion 10

The lesion here is of the 'New' - and the 'Not New'. The text embodies a rhetoric that presents, for some contextual purposes, participation as something new and different and even strange. This area of text arises in the same space as the language of caution. Here participation represents a dangerous newness, a disruption that demands a careful monitoring and containment. The sense of newness also relates to the progressive feature of the discourse - that forging ahead at the frontier. The newness requires an integration, a recuperation to the old and familiar. Thus the language around

participation returns it to the discursively familiar. It also requires control and monitoring - a task management set themselves.

However, the text also contains a talk in which participation is represented as not that different and new. There are frequent references that it is only an addition, a supplement, and does not replace or supplant existing normal procedures. At other points there is a clear expression of the view that participation already exists at Tridy - the only newness being a difference in form and scope. This sense is added to by the relation of participation to management style and skill. The difference between participation and non-participation is made slight - a matter of some small degree of change at the level of certain individuals. Participation in this arrangement is not a wild strangeness, it is at most a shift of emphasis. It should be no cause of concern to anybody. It poses no threat or disruption.

The latter is a rhetoric taken up and exploited by the shop-floor. They had not come to consider participation as anything new. They had not thereby noticed much that had changed. Participation was just an adjunct to existing management practices and discourse and had caused no significant changes to occur in their relations with management or to those practices and that discourse. This is associated with the language of ownership. Participation was seen as belonging to management, they had initiated it and controlled it for their purposes. The shop-floor avowed that they had no sense of ownership. Participation was merely another management 'game', a supplement to their current armoury of practices.

Lesion 11

This lesion is engendered by the tension created by the relation of participation with the natural and with the relation of participation with the unnatural. Once again it runs into other lesions including 10 above. The naturalness stems from those parts of the text where participation is related to changes and forces in the wider society. There are held to be changes taking place in society that are inevitably moving things towards a more democratic and participative arrangement. There is a relation of participation to this historical inevitability, this march of history. Participation at Tridy is then a wholly natural accompaniment to that,it is in step with natural events in the wider society.

Its sense of unnaturalness is mostly derived from its relation with training. The very interpolation of 'training' in the text immediately associates participation with the unnatural, the not given. Participation is perceived as a 'skill' that people can be trained to attain. This points to a potential absence in persons. There is a lacking in persons 'natural' capacities that is capable of being filled by training. The argument is from Rousseau where education (training) is put in counter-position to the natural, inherent state of affairs. There is a preformed and stable nature to which education is a cultural supplement. Nature v Culture (non-natural). (note that Derrida's deconstruction of Rousseau specifically treats of that division - it is part of the move to subvert the primacy of speaking (nature) over writing (educative/unnatural)).

The lesion is also apparent in the tension between participation's supposed newness, strangeness and difference, and its presentation as not new, as an extension, or a part of 'normal procedures'. As newness it is a strange, wild and disruptive potentiality. It moves

on the same ground as disorder, chaos, anarchy, revolution and death. It is a wild satanic side of nature. Contrasted then with the cultural ordering of normal organisational practices. Participation is incorporated into the known, the clear logical light of civilisation. But the lesion spreads here and becomes almost cancerous. Nature is also frequently made to represent harmony and a natural order of things. It is culture and society that interferes with and corrupts the harmony of nature. It is culture that is anarchic and holds the ground for revolution. From the Hobbesian perspective it is man's 'natural' capacity to be violent, disruptive - the structures of a benevolent coercive culture must ensure that man is kept in order - further confusion then, running through these discourses.

Lesion 12

There are a series of interconnecting lesions that spread around the siting of 'structure' in the text - or rather the various sitings and possible sitings of 'structure' in the text and its multi-form relations.

The lesions spread around that point in the text where the relations 'participation-as-structure' and 'participation-individual' coexist. That is, where participation is made to relate to aspects of individual psychologies or purely interpersonal relations, and then also at those points where it is made to relate to formal, role structures. It is a mirroring of the micro-, macro-distinction in the social sciences. That mirroring is, of course, not incidental because the participation text at Tridy is an intertext that reverberates with traces of discourses from the social and physical sciences.

The emphasis on the individual and the interpersonal sits in

those portions of the text where it speaks of relations of 'participation-style'; 'participation-skill'; 'participation-discussions' and so on. It reflects the proclivities of the consultants and the academic discourse that they bring to the situation, mixed with the organisational obligations on the personnel department to display their function in the expected ways (i.e. by introducing training programmes etc.). Participation here is defined in terms of individual's styles and capacities, in their psychological natures; and in terms of interpersonal skills and relations. Participation is also an interactional activity, forged in altered, emerging and on-going dealings between members and groupings within the company. (There is a sub-lesion here.)

The structural intercedes most directly at those points in the text where participation is made to conform to some overall blueprint-plan and representational structure. Most notably in the managing director's presentation. Here the structure of the company is set out graphically and formally, in rarified and 'objective' form. Participation is then constructed as a structural arrangement that matches that extant company structure. The talk here is of 'levels', of 'hierarchy', of 'programme' and so on.

There is a permanent tension in the text between these two different textures of meaning around participation. It is a tension made manifest in the dialogue and the relationship between the consultants, who place an emphasis on the interactional qualities of participation, and senior management who appear to see it as an obligation and a convention to represent participation in static, concrete structural forms.

The structuring of participation is achieved by a rhetoric that relates to a supposedly existing and accepted (as natural) structure of the organisation. That is a presumed shared taken-for-

granted. Organisations simply are organised and structured in that way. That is the given from which to proceed. The problematic is the entrance of participation and its place in that known and familiar state of affairs. The solution is to structure and define participation in such a way that it completely 'fits' (as hand to glove) the structure of the company. Preserving the established and 'natural' hierarchies and authority arrangements. The structure of the company is given as natural, right and obvious, participation achieves its own naturalness by its matching of that structure. The threat and strangeness of participation is recovered by its placing within this familiar structural discourse.

However, part of the other movement in the text talks of the gradual evolution of participation. Its growth in relation to the development of the dialogue between members. There is talk of a requirement for the scheme to evolve in a way that matches the particular expressed needs and wishes of each section of the factory. There is a supposed searching out of members' views and opinions and the development of the scheme on that basis. But the structural component, the definition of participation in those other formal ways works against such an approach. The developed plan and structure of participation becomes crystallised and takes on a force of its own. It becomes a monolithic structure that stands over the daily machinations of members involved. It has already been noted how the language of evaluation became increasingly concerned with the language of structure. The criteria for the progress and success of the scheme became interpretable not in terms of the quality of the dialogue between different parties, but in terms of the approximation of events to the details of the plan and structure. The attainment of the structure comes to figure in the vocabulary of motives of management. It also features in the talk of the shop-floor, especially

when the problem of issues being site-wide is interpolated. For the shop-floor it becomes imperative that the full structure of the scheme becomes realised; that a site-wide scheme is developed so that the blocking of issues on the basis of them being site-wide can be overcome. It is Peter who latterly comes to realise that structural achievement would not overcome necessarily the capacity and inclination of management to make unilateral decisions. He came to a recognition of their more fundamental and entrenched control over the vital signifying processes of the company. Not only do they control the means for the collection, production and dissemination of information and opinion but they are in a position to interpret and present them in ways that are extremely difficult to challenge. Difficult, not least because of the differential access to sources of information and opinion, which means that, under challenge, management can re-interpret and give other versions to their sources, in their accounts of events and other areas of discourse.

The talk about the requirement to access people's needs and aspirations is undercut by the increasingly unstoppable imposition of the plan and structure that had already been developed outside of that process. The development of, and decisions about, that structure and plan were made relatively unilaterally. (There was a negotiated quality since the consultants (having spent much time with the shop-floor) had an input to the discussions that were part of the creation of the plan.)

Lesion 12b

There is a lesion that more directly forms around the relation of 'structure - process'. This has already been clearly intimated in the preceding paragraphs - but it is more extensive and pervasive than is implied there. There is a rattling tension between

talk in the text that surrounds notions of process and those portions that relate around structure.

Participation in the context of Tridy is said to be part of a more general historical process taking place in the wider society. There is a move in all spheres of the social formation towards a more participative attitude. This links well with the gradualist, evolutionary approach to participation that is often espoused in the text at Tridy. The moves of society are portrayed as part of a natural, inevitable evolution towards ... (the teleology is not clear and not relevant here - evolution is an adaptive process rather than a process necessarily towards a pre-defined end). It becomes almost a matter of evolutionary survival (of the fittest) that the company adapt itself and includes itself in that process. On a micro-scale the scheme, too, is evolutionary (- not revolutionary recall). There is talk of the gradual development of the scheme, its 'growing' (and other organic, processual metaphors); adapting in the process to the requirements of different groupings. The scheme generally develops as an adaptive process in relation to the evolutionary process in society generally. And the scheme develops internally, adapted to the needs of departments, emerging and evolving. (Note that here there is a recurrence of the lesion between external and internal forces and the vocabularies of motive that accompanies it.)

The language here is undercut by an array of other metaphors that are not of the same organic, evolutionary nature. The figures of structure appear in the static formulations of 'levels', of geometric space, of 'verticality' and 'horizontality'. There is, in other words, a pervasive and complex structural, spatial metaphor in the text that is also made to represent participation and which clashes with the other, organic and processual metaphors that also

appear in the text. This is not a happy co-residence. There are other regions of the text that might be said to be contaminated by this lesion. For instance, one might suggest that there appears in the text language coined from the 'hard' sciences. There is a quasi-rigorous statistical-mathematical language, particularly in the talk surrounding monitoring and evaluating the scheme and in the 'training' talk. There is talk of 'analysis', of 'programmes', 'quantification', all of which might be said to site itself more readily in relations with structure (as a term employed in the hard sciences). Then there is talk from the 'softer' sciences, the social sciences ('human relations skills', 'roles', 'interpersonal skills'). And talk too from the (one might say) 'intermediate' sciences (biology particularly) (with terms like 'growth', 'maturation').

However, the rhetoric here is sophisticated and disguises any lesion extremely well. As I have pointed out in an earlier section, the metaphors of evolution and organicism are usually made to refer to the development of the scheme and its relationship to external events, whereas the spatial and structural metaphor is used to represent the end, and desired final point of that process. Again as pointed out, this allows the development of the scheme to be in positive relation to a wholesome, natural process of growth and maturation. It also allows a relation with an evolutionary process that is not only organic, but historical. The rightness of the process is bolstered by its partaking of a sense of historical and social inevitability. The actual embodiment of the scheme is articulated in a texture that returns it safely to the 'known' and culturally shared structures of the company. It is also related to the solid and reputable discourse of science with the promise there of order, logicality and truth.

Thus, both metaphors incorporate highly valued positive connotative relations. The movement incorporates the cultural/ ideological values inherent in notions of 'growth', 'nature' and the 'social sciences' and then also in the notions of 'physical science', 'structure', 'order' and 'culture'. The language of participation in both cases is returned by the metaphorical to regions of known and familiar discourse - regions that are comfortable and prized. The productivity of the test does not recognise the violence that might be said to be done to the notion of process by the closing of structure, or that done to structure by dissolving it in process.

With the texture of structure are other metaphors that relate participation to notions of 'levels'. The structural metaphor of levels relates directly to the established hierarchical arrangement of authority relations with the company. The talk of levels further incorporates the additional spatial metaphors of the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' relations that are said to naturally and obviously exist within the company. Participation then is made to relate and support the established authority relations and power-structure of the company by means of its being cast within these structural metaphors. Other portions of the text where participation is related to new ways of doing things, of changes in the relationship between levels and with an emerging process of altered interactional activity, with a coming together, fosters the split in the text at this point.

Lesion 13

There are further minor lesions that appear around the relation 'participation - representational democracy'. The first that can be identified relates directly to the above points. There was a rapid and ready acceptance of the legitimacy and relevence and appropriateness of the relation 'participation - representational democracy'

for reasons already explored to some extent. The rhetoric that draws up the shared ideology that makes that relation appear natural and right was particularly forceful and largely unchallenged. However what it disguises is a sense in which the very acceptance of that relation is at the same time virtually tantamount to a tacit acceptance of the hierarchical structure of the company. The notion of representation necessarily entails that there will be representatives from different portions of the population. The natural (sic) division of the population of the company is in terms of the existing functional, but more importantly, hierarchical divisions apparent. This need not be the case, but given the proximity of the texture of structure that again reinforces those existing arrangements, the likelihood becomes a virtual imperative. The acceptance of the representational system implies that there will be representatives from the various levels in the company. The representational system thereby comes immediately to reconfirm the appropriateness and natural place of the hierarchical arrangements with all that implies for the rights to exercise power.

There were some preliminary challenges to this set-up from sections of the shop-floor. There was a questioning of the need for all levels of management to be represented at the meetings. However, a rhetoric of 'fairness' and 'equity' was employed in which it was suggested that various levels of management had their own particular sectional interests that should be allowed a voice. The shop-floor then fully entered the representational discourse and voiced their protest and interests in terms of a desire for a straight split of representation between the workforce and management on a 50:50 basis with equal voting rights. This move too was counteracted by the texture of meanings around participation being a question of improved dialogue - an interactional activity that should avoid the old con-

frontations of which the 50:50 division was a manifestation. Participation at this point, was not about numbers.

Representational democracy became an obvious and natural relation of participation. It was barely challenged as a formalised principle. The established sense of representational democracy had it firmly in relation to elections and yet in this text the notion of nominated representatives for management personnel was introduced. Managers from within and beyond departments would be appointed to the participation committee. A convincing (?) organisational rhetoric sought to mask this departure. It is linked again with an espoused notion of 'fairness'. All sections should be represented on the committee and as some departments or levels had only one possible candidate that person should be co-opted. And, of course, other important sectional interests that impinge upon the department should, in all fairness, be represented, so members from personnel and executive functions should be appointed.

The problem here, of course, is that the rhetoric can only operate by reference to the traditional hierarchical structures of the company. The notion of appointed representatives in this case is pre-supposed by the existence and acceptance of those institutional levels of authority that are a feature of the status quo. As I have pointed out, the rhetoric makes those choices of inclusion appear natural, whereas they are in fact arbitrary and/or politically motivated. The same logic might have wanted to include a representative from head office, or the company development executive. The actual selection of appointed members is a reflection only of situational organisational purposes - purposes, one may surmise, of continued control masquerading as fair and equitable play.

The association participation-representational democracy, with an array of positive and affirmed ideological connotations,

makes participation, familiar and eminently palatable. However, that rhetoric reaches its limit with the entrance of the 'nominated' and 'appointed'. A fissure is established in the bond between participation and representational democracy. It reintroduces a language of unilateralism and control. It refers back to and reflexively suggests the power bases established in the dominant social formation as manifested in the levels of the hierarchical structures of the company.

At another point in the text there is an established relation between participation and representational democracy but a simultaneous denial of some of the accepted and traditional features of representational democracy. The relations' strength is built upon its relating of participation to a familiar and shared area of discourse (political democracy) that has an ideological naturalness and correctness. However,the relationship is again weakened (given a lesion) by the bastardisation of the democracy side of the relation. Explicitly, there is a repeated denial of the applicability of the oppositional-adversorial frame that usually applies in the traditional political discourse that the relation calls upon. There is a move away from any notion of a confrontational political discource. There is the talk of the need to represent all levels and the accepted implication that there are sectional interests present - but a denial that those sectional interests should become manifest in the political discourse (of representational democracy) in the usual adversorial and oppositional fashion. This perhaps introduces another lesion in the text;

Lesion 14

A tension in the recurrence of both a pluralist and a unitarist conception of organisations.

The lesion, between the espousal of true representational democracy, and other points in the text and other practices that undercut it, becomes exposed, and realised (especially by Peter) over the issue of 3.30 finish. It becomes apparent that the representational committee is only operating as a clearing house for issues. Unlike true mechanisms of representational democracy, the committee has no legislative or executive functions. Issues are merely brought to the committee, perhaps discussed, and then taken from there to some other place where unilateral decisions are taken and executed. Furthermore, it became increasingly clear that there were fundamental disparities between the two 'sides of the House', particularly in terms of the capacity to canvas and interpret and present opinion, and in the garnering of information.

Some of what follows is perhaps not adequately covered under the term 'lesions' as I have presented it. Some represent something akin to minor abrasions. In others I draw attention to further instances where lesions are exposed and exploited by those who become aware of them and the rhetoric that covers them. This listing here should not be considered as exhaustive.

Lesion 15

The relation participation-involvement is, at points in the text, made not to apply to the engagement of line management in the affairs of senior management. The relation is said to apply to shop-floor involvement with line management only. It is a lesion that is colluded with initially by members of line-management. The strength

of the relation and the rhetoric of involvement-mutuality is undercut by this movement.

Lesion 16

The relation participation-discussion, and further ones of influence, decision-making and so on, is similarly undercut by those points in the text where issues are removed from the auspices of the representational committee. Frequently issues are presented by the shop-floor and then handed over to management. They are taken outside of the group and handed over to other groups of managers or experts where unilateral decisions are taken and acted upon. The issues are subject to the habitual control of the management. There is a more general lesion, then, around the cohabitation in the text of a rhetoric of care, sharedness, mutuality - and that of control, of differential power, and unilateralisms.

Lesion 17

There is a lesion particularly in the later reported stages in the shop-floor (and on occasions others) discourse, engendered by the coterminous presence of talk of a reduction of 'them-and-us' and of mutuality, and points in the text that clearly index an adversonal stance. The reps. begin to talk of the need for preparation, of solidarity (amongst the shop-floor reps.), talk of battle and confrontation.

A simple example is illustrative. There is talk of a non-confrontational dialogue - a gentlemanly and businesslike discussion. However, in the same linguistic space there is the use of an analogy to the courtroom with all that implies for a clashing of adversaries - a clash of two diametrically opposed interest groups: Two 'sides'.

Lesion 18

There is a questioning of the lack of a positive response from the management side. A suggestion that participation should involve both 'sides' - that it should be a two-way affair. And yet, especially in the early stages, the shop-floor constantly ceded the initiative to management. There, the level of engagement was confined to the presentation of issues - management then reacted and provided the solutions.

Lesion 19

The text constantly refers to involvement, to taking part in events that affect the daily lives of the shop-floor. And yet there is a constant movement to position the shop-floor as passive recipients. It is, as already mentioned, something they collude with by ceding initiative to management - they are made the active agents which reciprocally positions the shop-floor in a passive mode. There are further moves to passify the shop-floor. They are told not to adopt a combative stance, for instance. They are not allowed access to the means of the production of authoritative versions of events but must become passive recipients of company minutes (the truth conveyed from the knowing author (as 'company') to a passive reader.

Lesion 20

There are numerous points in the text where lesions are actively exposed and exploited. There is a sense of the shop-floor calling the bluff of management rhetorics. The promises of various rhetorics are taken literally and a cashing-in on them develops. For instance, Cyril exploits the espoused 'progressiveness' of the

company in relation to the 3.30 finish issue. If the company is progressive, as they claim, they should lead the area in rationalising their hours of work arrangements.

There is a repeated sense of a disparity between 'what they say and what they do' which represents a growing awareness and exposure of the lesions in the management text. The rhetoric of management is seen not to be born out in other discursive practices at numerous points in the text. The analysis of Peter detailed in earlier sections readily draws attention to many of these instances.

CHAPTER 2

COUNTER-LANGUAGES

The nature of discourse is such that it offers both the ground on which the contest for control is enacted, and the very means for engaging in that contest. Language provides both the means of domination and the possibility of liberation. The textual nature of participation with its plurality and diversity of meaning and the ceaseless productivity of the signifying relations will always, in principle, provide multiple positions of change, of transformation, of moving beyond the provided and attempted closure. New relations can be developed, others diffused and otherwise rendered non-significant.

The text of participation at Tridy is, at least in part, engendered by the seeming urge, and possible organisational requirement, to keep saying more. Most elementally, fresh contexts of situation require fresh articulations (around the notions of participations in this context). There is an urge and a requirement to repetition. But it is a repetition that is never exact, that is, never replication - we have seen this in even the highly constrained terms of the management briefing document and subsequent articulations. There is in this way, no straightforward and clear representation of some supposed state of affairs in each utterance. Simple repetition - which entails both a newness and an oldness, a sameness and a difference - of itself creates the grounds for the proliferation of meanings. The very need to say more, to keep speaking, invariably (inevitably) entails the generation and interpolation of other relations and the setting in motion of fresh chains of signifiers. Such natural generative activity further militates against the possibility of containing and controlling meaning. Repetition, especially with

respect to its newness, operates as a transformation not a representation, it fosters the productivity of the text rather than its closure.

A simple example is illustrative. The managing director's 'slide-show' included a card that starkly asserted 'Participation means Greater Involvement'. Here meaning is seemingly held, fixed and exact. But as we know meaning will not be stilled in this way. Meaning circulates continuously in the on-going interactional activity of members and in the productivity of the text. Almost immediately the supposed containment of that icon is shattered by a continued saying. Not only is 'involvement' qualified in ways that extends the correspondence of the first relation, but there is a repetition that in its inexactness creates new possibilities. Thus in an utterance immediately following the first elation, participation is also said to mean 'better communications'. Here a new syntagmatic relation is generated with an accompanying fabric of associations. On other occasions there are closer repetitions of 'participation-involvement' that by their embeddness in varying contexts of situation, work against a different paradigmatic environment and thus release alternative fabrications of signifier relations.

The urge and necessity to keep speaking and the seriality of re-sayings in different contexts counters the proposed unity and coherence of the attempted message. Each utterance in its neatness, coherence and pressured finality is undercut immediately by subsequent re-sayings. The control becomes more and more diffuse as new possibilities are created by this activity. I am reminded of some research conducted by N. Rackham (1977) on negotiating skills. He made the point that successful negotiators were often characterised by the simplicity and unity of the point of their argument. There is a frequent tendency to construct a case by a circulation of points:

'this is so because of a), b) and c).' Rackham's research revealed that successful negotiators would base their argument on one strong point and would reiterate it when necessary and not add to or deviate from it.

It is in this generative activity as well as in the text of participation as a site of productivity that the lesions in the text are made likely, if not inevitable. More simply, the defining of participation takes place at different times and in different contexts of situation, the definitions so constructed will therefore vary. The 'company', in their attempt to contain meaning and to maintain a definition that suits their purposes is thus faced with the task of managing those disparities. There is a virtual paradoxical organisational requirement to present particular definitions with regard to specific contexts, and the rhetorical requirements of that context, and the need also to try and retain a sense of an ordered, cohesive and unitary message that overrides situational variance. There will be, in a sense, various levels of definition pertaining to different contexts of situation and different audiences, corresponding at some points to different levels in the company hierarchy. Thus the definitions marshalled and marketed to other levels of management will differ from those presented to the shop-floor. Lesions appear at the points where these abut, and at points where the different domains of the discourse become visible. Management (or the involved elite) will need to 'manage' these erruptions in the text and attempt to restore unity and coherence.

Given the array of strategies and effects that purport to close the text - those matters dealt with in the preceding sections - the capacity for alternative and challenging definitions depends on a

number of factors. Some of these can be stated briefly here and explored as we proceed. The hegemony of the management definitions is challengeable, one might say, only at that point when the shop-floor begins to approach the management text interrogatively. In other words, they must cease to accept the positioning that has them as passive recipients of the management 'message'. They must cease to concur with the classical conception of communication in which an intentional message is transmitted in encoded form to a receiver who decodes the message into its original, pure and intended form. There should be a recognition that the source of the emittence of an utterance is not inevitably the ultimate source of the meaning of that utterance. Managers are not the owners and fathers of the meaning of participation with natural rights of authority and respect. There must be a recognition of the activity of the 'reading' of definitions. Meanings are not fixed, unified and whole, in the message and received in that form. There must be a recognition of the active involvement of the 'reader/hearer' in the construction of meaning.

The shop-floor comes to treat the presented definitions non-naively. The meanings are not givens - stable, unalterable, unchallengeable. The relations established in the text are not the wholly natural, rightful and authoritative relations they are presented as being. The arbitrariness and chanciness of the relations put forward needs to be recognised. A fully interrogative and critical practice reveals the reliance of that naturalness and rightness on rhetoric and upon a particular ideology. Features of that ideology serve the interests of the dominant social formation and may not serve the interests of the shop-floor. Thus there needs to be an increasing recognition of the entrance of the discourse around participation

into the struggle for power embodied in the relations of employer-employee; owner-worker; superior-subordinate. It is the effectiveness of the rhetoric and the degree of collusion in, or sharedness of, the ideology that militates against a radical interrogative practice. I have already indicated some of the areas of that collusion - particularly in the early phases. The extent of the collusion places limits on the extent of the radicalness of the alternatives that could develop. There is certainly a sense of the management rhetoric 'matching' well with the discourse of the shop-floor in many areas and achieving the aspired to naturalness and acquiescence.

The dissolving of the distinction 'writer-reader', accomplished by Barthes and others, serves here. The shop-floor, at least to an extent, become not simple passive readers of the 'work' produced by the writing of management. They engage in a reading practice in the new developed sense where reading is a productive activity that always transforms the written. The shop-floor too, then, become 'writers' participants in the productivity of the text. Conscious of the textual qualities and alive to the free-play of the signifiers. They evade the static positioning that seeks to give them static and passive positions of intelligibility in relation to the text. A recognition of the multiplicity of meaning, of the textual and constructive features of the discourse offers the possibility of the discovery of new positions of intelligibility. From these positions the relations of difference assume a different aspect. New relations become apparent and the naturalness of the relations as viewed from the old positions is undone. A shift of position provides a fresh vista on the paradigmatic environment that alters the meaning potential of the series of options realised in the syntagm.

I am aware that the above has become somewhat prescriptive - let us retreat a little and work through the issues from another point.

The starting point as far as the shop-floor is concerned is characterised by, and detailed in, that section entitled 'Definitional Vacuums' and in the descriptions of shop-floor meanings provided much earlier. The power of the management presentation in the early stages is a function of the paucity of the shop-floor's own discourse in relation to participation. With a few exceptions the shop-floor discourse around participation was significantly underdeveloped, diffuse and unrelated. This needs to be contrasted with the sophistication and relative cohesion of the senior management discourse as displayed earlier. The emptiness created in the shop-floor discourse by the interjection of 'participation' requires filling; and the 'natural' and likely candidate is the already developed and promoted discourse of senior management. This emptiness alone is almost sufficient to explain the easy entrance of those definitions into the discourse without also considering the effectiveness of the rhetoric with its ideological underpinning or other features of management's control of the signifying practices with the company. The vacuum is created and craves to be filled. In the short-term at least the very preparedness and adjacency of the management discourse virtually ensures that it will osmosise into the space and attempt to fill it absolutely.

Further management activity is characterised by the attempts to protect those interpolated definitons whilst at the same time facing the organisational imperative of having to say more. The meanings are closed-off, boundaries established and alternatives cast off limits. Participation is rhetorically related to other signifiers

and other discourses in an attempt to contain meaning within a discursively familiar arena. Participation is related to the discourse of political representational democracy in ways that make that relation seem natural and that reflexively reaffirms the ideology behind it. The achievement of naturalness in that case erects boundaries of rightness that excludes alternate relations. And thus the complicated textures of meaning form into a more or less cohesive fabric around 'participation'.

However, as we have seen, in the process, 'participation' at Tridy becomes a text with all that implies for the proliferation of meaning; the elemental uncontrollability of meaning. It becomes a site of productivity where the free-play of the signifiers is Dionysic. In more pragmatic terms too, the attempt to confine meaning is perpetually undercut by repetition and the creation of levels of definition.

The achievement of (partial) closure is only attained by a rhetoric that attempts to cover the infinitude of language, that masks the play, that covers over the arbitrariness of the relations and the ideological nature of the endpoints that propose the boundaries of the text. The discourse is rhetorical; the closure is a rhetorical accomplishment. It is a rhetoric that creates <u>special</u> meanings (by a process that Foucault terms rarefaction), abstracted meanings that appear to stand as natural and honest but are only able to be said by virtue of a reliance upon a non-stated but ever present episteme. An episteme that is particular and reflexively supported by certain domains of discourse. Discourse is erased by rhetoric to disguise the particularness of the episteme. Rhetoric seeks to mask the fact that it is one discourse among many, founded upon an unexplored and particular episteme and to foster the impression that it is <u>the</u>

discourse founded upon a natural and incorrigible episteme.

But a business discourse cannot even achieve the unity and apparent coherence that some more developed and bounded discourses achieve (say, certain religious discourses or the discourse of experimental science - where the relation to the episteme is reflexively strong and self-enclosed). The business discourse, as exemplified by Tridy, already quite obviously participates in and is invaded by other realms of discourse, each anchored to differing episteme. Thus, in the course of the development of the participation text the company discourse (or perhaps sub-discourse) inhabits the same space as the discourse of science (with further division between the physical and social sciences) with its infallible episteme lurking in the distance; the discourse of political democracy; the discourse of social and historical determinism; the discourse of Fatalism; as well as an overarching discourse that masquerades as commonsense (but note the supposed 'innocence' of the discourse of commonsense is mythical - thus one might recast it as the discourse of bourgeois ideology or of humanitarian-liberalism).

One begins to see that discourse too is a wholly relational concept in the way that other language features have been revealed to be. Discourse, too, should not be conceived of as means of the clear articulation of a stable reality or as the making visible of thought (as pure and essential) but rather as a series of realised options from among possibles. Discourse then is also an activity, or an event if you will - or rather a series of events, and not then a series directed from an originary and stable source, or moved teleologically by some supposed end point to which it aspires. They are events made possible by, and necessary because of, practical purposes engendered by the proximity and interrelation of other discourse or discursive

events. Discourse no more has an identifiable and moving force than does text. And we must be clear here; it should not be imagined either that the discourse is directed by the episteme, rather the episteme is a realisation of discursivity.

One might say then, that discursivity embodies an inter-textual relationship. The discourse that I have wanted to call the 'company discourse' at Tridy is in relation to a range of other discourses. Not just synchronically but also in the sense of intertext already articulated. It stands as a vaguely separate discourse but is always and already inhabited by 'traces' of other discourses. The company discourse at Tridy does not then 'contain' the discourses of science and the others referred to. Indeed, a fullblown scientific discourse with its rigorous relation to the episteme would run counter to many organisational purposes. Rather it contains visible traces of these others and is also put into relation to them. The relation between the company discourse and the scientific discourse embodies possibilities of meaning that are peculiar to that relation. At the same time there are again similar paradigmatic relations. The fact that the company discourse indexes a scientific discourse as opposed to say an ecclesiastic discourse has clear implications for the discursive options present. Indeed, what has already been said in relation to text, could, in many ways, also be made to apply to discourse.

There is no smooth development of discourse, controlled by some intentional originary point. Neither is there any sense of development or linearity between discourses either synchronically or diachronically. They are characterised more by 'chance, discontinuity and materiality' (see Foucault 1971). They do not lie outside, or above, the course

of events as a means of artfully commenting upon them, they are intricately part of the events. They are not bodies of knowledge or pervasive structures of uncluttered thought predating and overseeing the pass of events. Rather "Discourses have to be treated as discontinuous practicalities that cross each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with each other, but just as often exclude and ignore each other." (Foucault 1971. p.54-55). The achievement of special meaning in relation to the run of events is made by 'systems of rarefaction' that are themselves discursive groups (within our society such groups might fall under the rubrics of experimental science; literature; psychology). Such groups are themselves defined and located in linguistic space in terms of their relations of difference to other groups. Thus a company discourse's status and sense of itself (its own self-rarefaction) is made meaningful only in relation to these other discourse systems that it may overlap and partially invade and be invaded by, but which are different. Different in the discursive events, they are aparty too, different in their symbolisation and signifying practices, different in their relations to an episteme and the episteme they realise on each occasion they are articulated. The interpenetration and intertextual quality of discourse makes their disclosure in particular instances highly problematic.

There is an inescapable imbeddedness such that one may speak of subdivisions within, say, company discourse. Such divisions become apparent in particular contexts of the situation, and serve different practical purposes. Thus, for instance, at a major CBI rally, the discursive event taking place may materialise a business discourse that is almost generic and that marks out a space that articulates a clear difference between itself and other major discourses. Particular utterances at Tridy may mark out a discursive place for itself

that establishes it as company discourse to distinguish it more clearly, say, from trade union discourse or even academic discourse. The members of the organisation will participate in that discourse differentially (as they will in many others); indeed the discursive event will and can be used to differentiate sections of the work-force. Indeed part of the reflexivity of the company discourse might be said to be its re-enactment of the divisions of the company.

The discontinuities within the discourse built up around participation at Tridy and in its relation to other discourses are part of what gives rise to the various lesions identified earlier. It is the recognition and exposure and exploitation of those lesions that is part of the means by which the text of participation can be released from its intended closure and which offers the possibility of alternatives and change. Within the very text are points from which a challenge to the proposed unity, coherence and naturalness of the espoused project can be mounted.

The relations of discourse indexed in the text of participation are, of course, a means of indicating systems of knowledge. The discourses to which participation is related at Tridy, such as that of political democracy, are ways of ordering experience. One might say that experiences attain the status of knowledge by coming to occupy a space in a particular discourse - or set of discourses. 'Our will to knowledge', as Foucault has it, is engendered by and engenders our discursive practices. For Foucault (at least in his early work) there are rules, systems and procedures which pervade discursive activity - which comprise, in their particular formations, discrete realms of discursive practices - the 'order of discourse' - a conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced. Such

orders of discourse are so primary, so crucial to the very ability to talk knowingly that they must ordinarily remain themselves unnoticed and unarticulated. They are vital and primal constituents of discourse and hence of knowledge. The details of those 'rules, systems and procedures; need not concern us necessarily here (see Foucault 1971) - Of more concern here (and in the next section) is the involvement of discursive practices in the struggle for power. There is a clear relationship between Discourse - Knowledge - Power. Foucault's concern is to 'deconstruct' those systems of thought which disguise what are in fact strategies of a will to power within a discursive practice that presents a semblence of objective knowledge. It is here that we can see why the discursive has been effaced. Discourse needs to be seen as representing things as they are - as mere intermediary between thought and reality. Its status as anything more significant needs to be avoided. As E.W. Said (1978) points out:

> "...if it (discourse) disappeared it did so for political reasons, the better for it to be used to practice a more subtle, more insidious form of control over its material and its subjects. Thus the very effectiveness of modern discourse is linked to its invisibility and to its rarity. Each discourse, each language - of psychiatry, penology, criticism, history - is to some degree a jargon, but it is also a language of control and a set of institutions within the culture which it constitutes as its special domain."
>
> (p.708)

Systems of knowledge are embodied in various discourses. Each discourse forces a categorisation and evaluation of experience in particular ways. Talk from within a particular discourse frames experience into categories that ask themselves to be taken as knowledge. Subjects constructed within discourses also, find their

apperception of experience constrained and formed by these discourses-as-knowledge. What cannot (and who cannot) be located within those established discourses is cast out from the realm of knowledge - ultimately to the domain of the senseless and hence the mad (the madman). The language of the mad is not a discourse - it cannot be held to represent knowledge - it is therefore a virtually silent language. It fails to engage any other discourse, its relational meaning is thereby denied. Thus also in the Tridy context, for participation to be talked about knowledgeably it has to find a location within a discourse. And preferably within a discourse that has high status as knowledge and which relates to institutions in society that sanction these domains of knowledge.

The discourses that lay claim to participation at Tridy thus need to be seen in relation to these supposed systems of knowledge and to the will to power and the institutions that inform them. I hope I have already demonstrated and described at least some of the ways in which 'participation' is thus located and related. The task for any critical challenge to those locations and the dominance of the definitions emerging, is to see that process as not natural and inevitable, but strategic and rhetorical; to come to understand it as a political process and an embodiment of the will to power. Part of the capability of the shop-floor to mount a counter-language is dependent upon an increased political consciousness. There is evidence of this, but it is something I wish to deal with in the next section.

The early difficulty of the shop-floor was that they were not able to adequately locate the signifiers of participation within a discourse. For the terms to assume any meaning at all and to aspire to any status as knowledge about the world, participation and

its relations needed to be so located. Management's presentation fulfilled that requirement. It offered the location of participation within realms of discourse that were at least partially familiar and which were recognisable and warrantable as adequate ways of relating these new terms to systems of knowledge. The discourses of science, of historical determinism and political democracy etc. were taken to be useful and correct ways of categorising experience and of talking about things knowledgeably. If participation is located in a series of relations that give it a sense of change and newness then the discourse of historical determinism is taken as an acceptable realm of knowledge that can adequately explain that sense of change and newness. Similarly if participation is related to political structures and processes, a sensible knowledge system in relation to political questions is accessed by the deployment of a discourse of representational democracy. These are known and shared ways of speaking and of ordering experience. The accomplishment of the management rhetoric is to make these relations to and between discourses appear as natural, obvious - as the only legitimate and possible ones in the context of Tridy.

The shop-floor then, begins by being faced with an unpalatable situation. Either it accepts the discursive arrangement on offer from management, or it suffers the unease of an interpolated newness, that they are themselves unable to adequately locate in discourse(s), that continues to be present but which operates beyond the bounds of their possible influence and continues to be devoid of much meaning. The very presence of the term in the adjacent discourses of management and its injection into the general company discourse, of which they are ineluctably and necessarily (for the protection of their own interests) a part, generates the awareness

of an emptiness in their own talk that demands some filling up. If they are to engage management at all around this term that is visibly present in the (shared - partially) company discourse, they need to locate it within sensible domains of discourse that give it meaning and subject it to the known systems of knowledge. The first stage of the shop-floor's appropriation of the language for their own purposes, therefore, necessarily involves at least a partial acceptance and engagement of the discursive arrangement given to them by management.

The language of the shop-floor, and more particularly, their representatives, comes initially to mirror the language introduced by management. Indeed, the management discourse is constructed, if not directly in interaction with the shop-floor, at least with an eye in their direction. The rhetorics hit the spot of shared ideology. Gradually, however, the representatives begin to develop a language of their own. A language that builds on that emanating from management, but different to it. There are some general points that can be made about this new language and its relationship to other modes of discourse within the setting.

In the first place, it is a language that draws on the lexicological features of the management discourse but creates a distance from it - or comes to occupy a different linguistic space. It takes items from that other discourse and places them in fresh relations. It also works against a different and shifting paradigmatic environment. Perhaps more importantly it takes much of the management's rhetoric at face value, as it were, and turns it back to confront management. Management are forced to ponder on the image and reflection of their <u>own discourse</u> assembled and presented

in varying contexts of situation at different times and for different purposes. The need to say more generates these serial resayings that do not always readily form a coherent cohabitation. The rhetorical assemblage of relations, particularly with regard to relating participation to various other realms of discourse, when viewed in its totality, when abstracted from the particular contexts of their articulation, comes to exhibit just that textual quality that has been fully described in preceding sections. The overall coherence is disassembled and revealed as polymorphous and only loosely bounded. There are rhetorics that create the impression of a smooth passage from one discursive realm to the next and that disguise the arbitrariness of the endpoints of each chain of relations. But there is no adequate rhetoric that serves to bind the whole together. Each rhetorical point of assimilation and recuperation works within its own contextual ground (to a degree), but there is no overarching rhetoric that smooths the plane of the whole terrain created by the summation of these individual grounds. There are points in the text that are characterised by more or less coalescence and boundedness, those textures described earlier, that accomplish in particular contexts a degree of unity of message. But considered diachronically, the arrangement of texture to texture appears more as a pragmatically derived hotchpotch marshalled in particular contexts for particular purposes, and not held together strongly by some formative rhetoric.

Not only are these lesions engendered by the productivity of the relations within textures, but there are lesions, fostered by the seriality and contextedness, between textures and between the same texture at different points of manifestation. The counter language of the representatives (and the shop-floor membership) is in part realised by a recycling of those textures or portions of them in new contexts or in new arrangements that alters their make-up and their

meaning. By way of illustration, I draw the readers attention to the point in the development of participation where the 3.30 finish issue was at its height. The management had constructed a texture around the relation between participation and progressiveness; the company as forward-thinking, dynamic, in touch with, and one step ahead of, the turn of events in the wider society. Cyril in confronting management's intransigence in relation to the 3.30 issue replays that rhetoric. If that relationship holds, if the company presents itself as progressive, why do they not extend that to a progressive rationalisation of the hours-of-work arrangements at Tridy. As he ironically and challengingly points out, the company 'used to lead the town' in relation to that feature of organisational life - why do they now behave so conservatively and cautiously? At other points the representatives (particularly Peter) draw attention to the re-interpretation and misrepresentation of the participation-representational democracy relation. It will be recalled that this relation achieved rapid and almost universal legitimacy and acceptance. However, its realisation at different points in the text soon exposed the fact that its rhetoric was used to mask varying, and often contradictory, interpretations. Peter points out to management that in a true representational democracy, both sides (?) - or all representatives have similar facilities of information and opinion retrieval, interpretation and presentation. Again in the case of the 3.30 issue, this was demonstrably not the case. He also draws attention to the fact that if the relation participation-representational democracy is to be taken literally, if it is to access the wider meanings of the dominant political discourse in society, as the rhetoric intends that it should, then in the context of Tridy, that should be realised in terms of the representation group having legislative and executive functions and not merely debating functions.

The representatives learn to replay the rhetorics of management rather like cashing in a promissory note. The extent to which this is naive or strategic is hardly determinable. Having learnt much of the discourse that management has presented, its continued re-employment by the shop-floor will continue to play on the productivity of the text, discovering new possibilities in the text. In addition, the resaying by the shop-floor, in fresh contexts, in relation to their own interests and in the background of their own discourse on company matters, will perforce resite features of the management discourse. There is, perhaps, both a knowing and strategic exposure and exploitation of the lesions in the text, and a repetition in new contexts that naturally surfaces those lesions.

This is not to say that the developing discourse amongst the representatives attains a cohesiveness that is absent from the management discourse. Their discourse too is characterised by a repetition that is in excess. Their discourse too gives birth to its own lesions. It is not the case that management's talk alone acts as text - revealed and available to a critical practice by the shop-floor as audience. The talk from all quarters together operates as text. The talk of representative and member is as defeasible, as open to deconstruction and malicious replaying by management, as that of management is by representatives. The text is a continuing and emergent battleground where the fight for pertinent and tactical closure of meaning is a ceaseless activity of move and counter-move.

The said battle is most apparent in the verbal relations between the shop-floor representatives and management. The committee meetings of the participation groups are most obviously the battleground. However, this glosses some crucial subtleties and some more complex relations. Most notably the relationship between the shop-

floor and its representatives and the position of line management in relation to their seniors and to the representatives and the remainder of the shop-floor adds significant complexity to the territory of the battleground and the nature of the battle. More of this will come to light in the next section.

There is a tendency to view the activity of the representatives, their development of a discourse in relation to participation, as the only potential ground for a challenge to management's proposed definitions. There has been a tendency in this text to contrast the energy and awareness of the representatives with the apathy, scepticism and changelessness of the shop-floor membership. It is tempting to assume, thereby, that only the representatives, by fully engaging the management discourse, hold any hope of developing a counter-language and of coming to construct alternative and challenging definitions to those presented by management. However, I would like to suggest an alternative perception that avoids that temptation.

It might be said that the shop-floor failed to assimilate the discourse around participation propounded by management and engaged by their representatives. They became minimally aware of the presented meanings of participation, sufficient perhaps to ease the discomfort of the definitional void experienced initially. However, the discourse was never owned by them, was never fully incorporated positively into the discourse. Participation continued to be seen as a management game - couched in what was ultimately management language. The traditional shop-floor discourse on industrial relations matters is most easily characterised as a language of protest. It was largely a language of negativity that spoke of powerlessness, anomie, frustration and so on. The introduction of participation did little to dispel

this initially. Participation was approached with the proverbial moaning-and-groaning script (note: this was its characterisation by management and the consultants and not how it was spoken of by the membership.) In this sense participation was made to cohabit their normal talk on company matters. Participation is put against the negativity of the shop-floor discourse. It is talked of only as a potential, if unlikely, palliative to the existing grim situation. It only engages shop-floor discourse at those points where it can be seen to have a bearing on established grievances. There is talk of an ideal state of affairs where those grievances are resolved, where the shop-floor don't feel alienated, powerless and frustrated, where their views are listened to and acted upon in desired ways. If participation can operate in some of the ways in which it is presented, then it could conceivably act as a cure, it can be a healing agent - making the company a fit place for individuals to work in. But there is considerable scepticism.

Part of the negativity and the language of protest revolves around the frustration of past failures, of thwarted efforts to have their views attended to, to get the grievances settled. The company is characterised as possessing a false progressiveness where new schemes are introduced that purportedly will change things but do not. These are termed 'management games', introduced for obscure reasons, that in fact operate as agents of no-change, of further supporting, and by their familiarity, becoming part of, the status quo. The negativity of the shop-floor discourse is at least partially derived from such purportedly empty gestures and the frustration of an inertia in the face of a rhetoric of change. Participation is seen in just this way by many of the shop-floor. It is yet another 'management game' - a gesture of change and of attendance to shop-floor wishes.

But it is owned by management, not by the shop-floor. It is introduced for management purposes - either vaguely and inexplicably or concretely, as a means of forestalling trade union activity for instance. It must be viewed then with great scepticism. It comes to fit into shop-floor discourse as a relation: 'management game - no change'. (The reader will recall all these negative and sceptical expressions from the early phases - 'nothing will be done'; 'they will only change things when they want to'.)

The shop-floor, one might suppose, is already in possession of a discourse that enters the battleground for meaning. Their language of protest confronted by the stasis of the status quo is that battleground. Participation, for them, does not fundamentally shift the ground or the basis of that battleground. It enters only as a possible means of attaining redress for the protested points - but more likely as a familiar management oriented ploy, that promises and makes gestures but is ultimately an instrument of no change, of the status quo. Participation enters that discourse, and that battleground in this full negativity. The shop-floor do not engage the developed and provided discourse around participation in its supposed positive aspects, or in a positive way. They display little inclination to incorporate those relations of 'participation-positive discussions' or even 'participation-sharedness'. Features of the talk around participation are only incorporated to the degree that they are held to have a bearing on the negative discourse of the shop-floor. Thus 'communication-participation' is invokable within their discourse if it can be taken to entail a sense of the shop-floor being better able to communicate their grievances, or if it will reduce the alienation they experience. All features of participation-talk return to the alleviation or potential alleviation of present points of protest

and grievance. The reader might note the degree of disinterest from the shop-floor in relation to the 'operatives-setting-up-machines' issue, with its implication of, 'participation means job restructuring - for its intrinsic rewards'. Or the difficulty of the representatives in convincing the shop-floor membership that 'useful discussions' had taken place at the meetings that were of benefit. The relation 'participation - useful discussion' was not viewed as meaningful in the absence of concrete action in response to a grievance.

The shop-floor membership largely retained their habitual mode of discourse and their language of protest, scepticism and negativity. It did not, of course, remain untainted by the entrance of the talk surrounding participation that became highly developed and sophisticated among members of management and the representatives. But the language of participation did not supplant the habitual language of protest. It did not become taken up as the only or even the major means of casting industrial relations problems and grievances. The shop-floor could be said, in a sense, to already possess a counter-language - not situated in the discourse of participation and positioned as a counterpoint to management's definition of participation - but retained in that ground of protest against the status quo. The introduction of participation had not significantly or fundamentally shifted that ground.

The retention of that habitual discourse had important implications for the evaluation and meaning of participation, and for the relationship between the shop-floor and their representatives. The nature of that discourse, especially its full negativity, made it the ground against which all things were tested and measured. It was in that way, a manifestation of a kind of workforce episteme. In some ways the negative aspects of it had become so entrenched that they

formed an integral part of that episteme. Thus there were points within the discourse that amounted to virtual incorrigible propositions. One might suppose that 'fatalism' and 'powerlessness' were a part of that - 'management won't change things if they don't want to' - 'nothing will really happen', 'this is the way things are'. And in relation to issues supposedly dealt with by the participation group, each successive failure to cope with issues in ways circumscribed by that discourse (e.g. the concrete resolution of grievances) reflexively supported the appropriateness of the discourse and the veracity of the episteme. There was very much an attitude of 'what did we tell you' when the more engaged reps. reported back another failure or delay to progressing an issue. There was a frequent denial that anything had been done - that any change had taken place. When alterations were acknowledged they were attributable to means outside of the auspices of a purely participation discourse - thus: 'the resolution of that issue was already on the cards'; or the change was perceived as being in managements best interests or management initiated (confirming, 'they will only change things when they want to'), or it was now recast as a completely non-significant change. The discourse predicted no-change, and that was how events were characterised.

There is a distance that develops between the language of the shop-floor and the representatives. The representatives being more exposed to the developed discourse of management and the interactions in which it is revitalised and emergent become, not surprisingly, more emeshed in it. Initially much of that discourse (particulary in relation to the consultants) is co-opted by the representatives. As the scheme progresses, however, they develop a series of relationships and turns in the discourse that make it more recognisably their own. It is a discourse that significantly shifts away from that of the

shop-floor membership; it develops into a sophisticated discourse around participation and comes eventually to stand as a counter-language to that being promulgated by management.

However, following that movement too readily leads to the assumption that the representatives come to occupy the only position of potential challenge to management's definitions. Their very activity, and the difference of their burgeoning discourse fosters that impression. That assumption overlooks the retained ground of challenge contained in the original shop-floor discourse. That remains an oppositional frame, albeit a highly negative one, and one locked into a recircling reaffirmation of the hopelessness and inevitability of the position. It is not too fanciful, and was indeed suggested by some members of the shop-floor, to suggest that the representatives were seduced into participation, within a management discourse, that pacified the confrontation and cast grievances into terms derived from that discourse. They only emerged from that emollient position via a gradual reconfrontation with the power relations that are in fact already acknowledged by the traditional shop-floor discourse. The shop-floor discourse stands its ground and will not be deflected from its representation of things as they are, it will not be subsumed by an encompassing and diluting 'company' discourse where a challenge is recast as a challenge to their own interests. The representatives are seen as entering that movement only to emerge at the other end with a recognition of the same fundamental and unpalatable ground from which they embarked.

The emergent discourse of the representatives must be viewed as, to a degree, derived from the conjunction of two other realms of discourse; that presented by management and that habitual discourse of their colleagues on the shop-floor. The representatives are placed

in a position where they must partake of both discursive realms in their routine activities. This confluence, not always a happy one, almost ensures the distinctiveness of the reps. discourse. They come to learn, in a sense, the new discourse, to share in the supposed understanding given by the relations participation is put into by the management discourse. They are given/achieve a position of intelligibility in relation to that discourse. It is avowedly a 'privileged' position, and necessarily different to that attainable by their members. They are caught in a classic cleft stick. They are confronted with the crucifying position of translators between discourses. They still inhabit the discourse of their membership and must relay issues and texts from the 'participation arena' where they must acknowledge and engage in management discourse; and vice versa. They become linguistic isolates, tethered intolerably to two ill-matching discourse domains by an unstable archipelago of vaguely shared terms. It is perhaps not surprising, simply from that standpoint that they should, as a pure matter of survival, consolidate that island position and cultivate an increasing sense of solidarity and a discourse that reflects that position whilst at the same time creating it - recreating it.

There is a distinctive movement in the language of the representatives that we might analytically divide, almost, into phases. They begin, of course, from directly within the discourse of the shop-floor. Their talk at the early meetings clearly reflected this. They adopted the expected stance of the presentation of grievances to management. The style is culled directly from the habitual 'moaning groaning', ever hopeful, negative script of the shop-floor. Grievances couched in the language of the shop-floor, concretised and localised, are delivered up to management with the expectation/hope that they will be dealt with in the manner implied by the management rhetoric, and the 'correct'

action taken. It is the passive, speculative and sceptical mode familiar from the shop-floor discourse. It is essentially a passive, merely protestive position. Issues are given up to management. The means of handling the issue, decisions relating to it, and action taken are retained by management; it is they who come to own the issues. It is a position of passivity that is encouraged by, and reciprocally created by, the language of management. It is the early phase that is made up of this posture. It is a posture well documented in preceding sections. The shop-floor reps. are sceptical (although perhaps less so than many of their members, even by this stage), negative, but hopeful. Participation is viewed either hopefully as a medicine to cure the problems embodied in the shop-floor discourse, a means of righting grievances, or a piece of quackery, another management game.

Prolonged and extensive exposure ensures that they come to learn the new vocabulary and take part in the discourse that has already been built up in relation to participation. Given the position they find themselves in and are placed in, they must do this if they are to engage management and if they are to do so in other than purely confrontational terms. And part of management rhetoric is a move to ensure that the representatives do not remain in that confrontational mode. They are encouraged (indoctrinated) to avoid confrontation, to avoid personal attacks, to talk in generalities, to not present 'petty' individual grievances, not to operate from the 'moaning and groaning' script. This is part of the pacification programme. They are,in effect, actively encouraged to dispense with the habitual discourse of the shop-floor and to adopt a different mode. That mode is characterised by a quasi-gentlemanliness, an understatement, an abstraction, an impersonality, a rationality, order, good sense, a seriousness and a

businesslike stance - some might want to say it was the adoption of a management mode; an inclusion strategy; an imposed managerialness.

The language of the reps. at this stage comes to echo with the provided language of the consultants definitions of participation and management's rhetoric. It might be characterised as the idealistic phase, for they embrace that rhetoric naively, uncritically and with optimism. Their language is replete with talk of a coming together, a sharing, an openness and honesty, a trust, a decrease in 'them-and-us', a common, constructive approach to problems of mutual interest. These are the relations around participation that inhabit the text realised in shop-floor reps. discourse. These relations are contrasted with the more negative, sceptical ones of the earlier phase, and the more strategic, confrontational, pro-active relations that were yet to come.

That third phase begins to appear as the rhetoric fails to match up to the actions and practices of management, that is, as it fails to continue to mask the true project of the management discourse. The rhetoric that offers familiarity and comfort to the espoused project of the text becomes fully exposed. The lesions begin to appear. The productivity of the language, the release of an uncontrollable chain of signifiers, the spaces between textures, the seriality and excess of repetition and the need to say more, conspire to open-up the management discourse, to permeate and puncture its boundaries, to release meaning, to expose the rhetoric and the fissures in the text; to pressurise the intended closure of the text.

New relations are developed, the plurality of the text is realised. The lesions expose the reliance on the metaphorical and make apparent the rhetorical attempt to make the presented relations appear as natural. Their arbitrariness is recognised; and their political and ideological status. There is a dawning recognition that

the relations are not necessary and complete; they are not natural, obvious and innocent. There is a realisation of the fact that the ideology, the aporia that sustains them and that they sustain may not be entirely shared in by the shop-floor, that it may not adequately match their interests. The very textuality of the participation text shatters the supposed closure on meaning aspired to in the management discourse, it ruptures the tight weave of the fabric, stretching it, pulling it apart and renting it. That stretching and renting offers the possibility of entering the text at new points. Points of entry that provide the means of invasion and a subversion that further widens the fissures. A movement that offers up new possibilities in the text and new positions of intelligibility in relation to it. If the relations are revealed as non-natural, non-obvious, then immediately the potential for alternative relations becomes feasible. The realisation of the rhetorical nature of the discourse means that the ideology is exposed and can be examined. It means that the rhetoric can be handled, played with, turned back on itself and exploited. The text can be 'read' and 'written' again in the same moment. The shop-floor representatives can begin to approach it interrogatively, to deconstruct it and intercede constructions of their own.

The latter phase begins with some fundamental questions. There was a growing feeling that issues were not being progressed, indeed that some were being deliberately swept-under the carpet or in other ways lost. The action and atmosphere promised in the management rhetoric was not being fulfilled. The reps. came under increasing pressure from their sceptical membership who would not accept that any change had taken place. The passivity of the representatives became a clear issue. The time-honoured ploy of merely presenting issues over to management for them to deal with was perceived as being not

effective. There was an increased questioning of the quality and sense of management's answers and reasons in relation to issues. There was, in a sense, an exposure of the incompleteness of management meanings. There was a questioning of the reasons, and remember that the consultants had made much of the importance of the provision of adequate reasons. Indeed the baseline of participation had been made the provision of sound reasons for action and decisions.

This amounted to a challenge to the position of passivity that the reps. found themselves in. That positioning was now under scrutiny. There was the beginning of a questioning of the wisdom of ceding the ownership of the issue to management. There was a move to approach the meetings more strategically and not to present the issue in such a way that it positioned management as owners of the issue. There was a more forceful assertiveness and challenge to management's attempts to close off issues, to present their answers as final and absolute. The reps. began to challenge the rate and means by which issues were progressed. Much of the questioning centred on the procedures of the meetings. There were doubts expressed about the role of the chairman, the control of the agenda, the manufacture of the minutes and so on. There were more fundamental questionings of the right to the control of information, its retrieval and dissemination, and of other procedures. More crucially still, there was a more aggressive stance adopted in relation to the exercise of power: who defines, who decides what is fair and what is not? For instance, who decides that an issue is site-wide, and what criteria inform that decision? The reps. had become aware that the rulings were not as logically consistent and obvious as they had been presented. That issues were being shielded that were politically 'sensitive', that forged towards the prerogatives and privilege of management.

Who decides what is a local issue and what isn't, are the reasons given satisfactory or not?

There was also a questioning of the position adopted by management representatives in relation to the scheme. The management reps. had not brought any issues that could be identified as their own to the meetings. If participation were really as it was defined, as a sharing, as a common-approach to problems of mutual interest, why did management merely limit itself to a reactive mode? It merely perpetuated a 'them-and-us' approach. Here a lesion is exposed and turned back on itself. There is an intermediary point here between the idealist phase, when that exposure calls for an actual enactment of the rhetoric, and the later phase when the exposure is in ironic mode.

The pacification programme is increasingly rejected. That positioning within a managerial style of discourse; of reasonableness, of polite behaviour, is questioned. There is a realisation that a more confrontational mode is permissable and in certain situations not only desirable but necessary. Issues that challenge individuals and their exercise of power become more apparent in the discourse. There is a more open confrontation of the rights and privileges of management and the exercise of assumed prerogatives. The change of style is as much at issue here as the substantive topics tackled. The shop-floor reps. become generally more aggressive and assertive. There is a rejection of the passivity that cedes the initiative to management and accepts their versions as adequate and correct representations of the way things are. There are repeated instances in the text where, for instance, the reps. challenge the view that management have a privileged position in relation to an exclusive and adequate knowledge of work and work processes (this again ironically

returns the rhetoric that spoke of participation in terms of the under-utilisation of untapped resources within the workforce).

Out of these challenges and questionings emerges new definitions and relations around participation that begin to form into a recognisable separate and challenging discourse. There is a shift from the language of protest, and a further shift from the accommodation of the idealist rhetoric taken from the management discourse. Fresh, although not original associations and meanings begin to develop. They still bear traces of the former positions of the discourse; still tied to both the shop-floor and the management discourse, but still different from them.

The new language is characterised by an assumption of responsibility for the issues and for the notion of the participation scheme itself. There is an assumption of the ownership of issues by the group. This is a stepping out of the passivity position and a retrieval of issues from management. It moves to stop the ceding of initiative and control to management. It naturally comes closer to a challenge of management's absolute right to control issues and particularly the criteria devised for the resolution of the issue and the right to make binding and authoritative decisions in relation to those issues. Management are no longer simply permitted to define issues or redefine the issues as they wish. The reps. begin to engage in redefinitions of their own. There is indeed a change in the very nature of issues that are brought to the meetings by the reps. There is a lessening of the appearance of localised, individual, 'hygiene' issues and a move towards more substantial issues that have wider implications and that are more likely to approach the power relations within the company.

The new mode, the new language is best represented in those articulations of Peter reported in preceding sections. Participation

is redefined not in terms of mere 'discussions' or 'communication' or even 'involvement'; the new arrangement exploits the 'participation-representational democracy' relation and defines participation as involving notions of executive and legislative functions. Meetings should be characterised by debate, then a concrete decision taken (collectively), action designated and executed with speed and precision. Issues are retained within the group and not passed outside into, ultimately, management control. Decisions are made within the group (presumably on some consensus basis - or perhaps on a formal voting system - although the latter was not articulated at this stage it was an issue earlier on) and action emanates from those, collective decisions. All this is in significant contrast with the array of signifiers related to participation in the earlier phases.

The new language talks of solidarity - within the group and particularly in relation to the shop-floor representatives (although departmental line managers are partially included). A solidarity in the face of something else, - a solidarity in their own discourse - a drawing of their own (discursive) boundaries - perhaps a closure on meanings that management had allowed to run free, but closed in their terms. This is concretised in terms of the reps. appropriating the right to meet together as a group prior to meetings. There is talk of preparation, of marshalling a case. The provision of the means to accomplish a discursive coherence - a discourse, shared and familiar to all reps. In confrontational/oppositional frame that case is presented and 'sold' to management. There are implications of strategies and tactics here very different to the passive serving up of an issue in its raw and naive essentials. There is talk of the need to be more assertive, more proactive - to approach issues forcefully, positively and constructively. The group seeks to attain

the right to retain and enclose the issue - to see it through from initiation to resolution and implementation of solution.

This proactive posture is adopted also in relation to their members. They are still faced with much apathy and scepticism from the shop-floor and a dilution of their solidarity by recurring internicine bickering. To overcome this the group asserts itself as leaders. It is prepared to act independently of its members in terms of the instigation and follow-through of issues. The democratic representation arrangement is extended - the reps. re-position themselves as 'parliamentarians' with a mandate free to pursue their own issues within broad parameters of confinement. The reps. are prepared to act with a degree of independence, to take an issue, to build it into a case and a programme of action and to present it, and again 'sell' it to their members. There is the beginnings of the establishment of a new hierarchical arrangement (echoes of the managing director's plan and relation of participation to the existing structural arrangements in the company) with the reps. in a new, intermediary position. They become leaders, not mere passive interpreters of shop-floor opinion. There is a creeping division between reps. and the members. The reps. continue to exhibit a commitment to the scheme and to be protective towards it in the face of disinterest and even hostility from their members. There is a gap between the discourse of the reps. and their members. The membership begin to feel that they still do not own the issues (particularly note the 'girls to do set-ups' issues). There is a tendency to react to issues promulgated by the representatives in a manner similar to the way issues presented by management were reacted to. But more of that in the next section.

There was, finally, a growing questioning and recognition of the crucial structuring of organisational systems in ways that reflect

the disparity in fundamental power relations within the company. It was recognised, for instance, that the institutional machinery was geared to favour management's capacity and right to access opinion and information throughout all levels of the company - a facility not accessible to the shop-floor reps. It became apparent that management were able to collect opinion and informtion as and when they chose - to interpret it in ways that suited their purposes - and to distribute and release it at a time and in a manner that suited them. These mechanisms, the methods and criteria remained a mystery to the shop-floor and were to that degree unchallengeable. Management could present versions as authoritative, accurate and absolute - and since the grounds for that version were not visible, it made it extremely difficult to challenge the position. In short, there was a recognition that management still retained a fundamental control of most of the vital means of signification within the company. The move to challenge that privilege entails a head-on confrontation with the very mechanisms of control, of hierarchy and unilateralism within the company. It faces directly the issues of power relations and the very means of sustaining and challenging those relations.

CHAPTER 3

THE ACTIVITY OF POWER:

Ordering, Excess and Transformation

I approach the issue of power with some trepidation. It is indeed a thorny issue and one which social psychologists have tended to confront somewhat circumspectly. I want to tackle the issue on two fronts; what might be termed a theoretic approach and a pragmatic approach. The former concerns a broad conceptual consideration derived and developed in relation to the broad theoretical thrust that has pervaded the thesis thus far. The latter concerns some practical confrontations with the power issue made manifest as the scheme developed at Tridy. I will treat of these in reverse order.

Power Shifts

Organisation talk at Tridy only rarely spoke of power explicitly, but needless to say its presence permeated much that took place, and was something people were aware of in varying degrees at different stages. It is fair to say that it rose more readily to the surface as the scheme developed.

The first point to be noted is that the management's early presentational definitions in relation to the scheme expressly elided any reference to 'power'. Participation was put into relation with various elements and textures, but 'power' was never an explicit syntagmatic relation. 'Power-sharing' is a conceivable relation with participation and has occurred at times in the wider discourse on industrial democracy. It certainly stands in the paradigmatic environment as an item that might have been in the stead of, say, 'influence' or 'involvement' - 'participation means power sharing'. Its

absence, is of course part of the meaning of those present items.

In the talk of the shop-floor, the issue of power arose early on in a tangental form. It arose especially in talk about their relationship to supervision, their immediate superiors. Much of the early talk, the complaining script, directly dealt with the ability of supervision to control the shop-floor members, to move then willy-nilly from band to band, to 'whistle' them and so forth. In terms of participation directly, some of the early talk included an expressed expectation that participation might alter, in some way, the relationship between the shop-floor and line management. In the shop-floor discourse at the outset, with its rather parochial, concretised nature, it was that immediate relationship that was spoken of as the significant locus of power - it was that power relation that was 'felt' and that required change.

It was noticeable that part of the solution to that problem was spoken of in terms of being able to progress issues 'out of the department'. There was an expressed view that the 'blocking', 'squashing' and the arbitrariness was manifest in the line supervision; that if issues could be placed more directly before senior management they would be more expeditiously and equitably dealt with. There was a faith in senior management. The power of senior management was not questioned, indeed by these suggestions it was colluded with. Remember here also the comments made about the 'natural' rights and duties of management - 'they are here 'to manage', 'it is their responsibility to make decisions.' The fundamental authority structure of the organisation was accepted and colluded with, it was taken as a right and a natural feature of organisational life. Fatalism: 'that is how things are'.

More directly in relation to the development of the scheme the issue of power was again touched on indirectly when certain process and structure concerns about the mechanics of the scheme were given expression. It came particularly to the fore in relation to the composition of the participation group and some proposed voting procedures. Some members of the shop-floor spoke with some concern about the make-up of the group. There was talk about equitable representation. Some were expressly concerned that the group composition should have a 50-50 make-up. There was talk of voting right and of the right to veto. As it turned out these discussions were somewhat academic since the scheme was subsequently defined by others in non-numerical terms - the criteria for the make up of the group was defined in terms of 'the representation of all sides' and in terms of the quality of the dialogue and not in terms of equal voting rights and veto.

The discussion clearly relates back to the preceding point, but also approached some more crucial power issues from which it swerved away. The consultants made much of the ultimate ability of management to say 'no' (although with 'reasons') and this was, at least tacitly, accepted by the shop-floor.

In these early stages then, 'power' was not a present item in the talk. Participation was presented and spoken of in terms of 'understanding', an 'exchange of views', 'discussions', and so on. A liberal/Liberal perspective perhaps. In the continued engagement, particularly between the representatives and management these relations became increasingly under scrutiny. As their implications were tested out, as various 'lesions' surfaced, the appropriateness and usefulness of the relations became questionable. At those points,

for instance, where participation had been defined in terms of change and it became apparent that these other relations entailed that there was very little change. Those relations were acquiesced to originally but, the reps. especially, began to form more radical relations as time went on. It might be possible to talk of this process in terms of political consciousness.

Senior management were also prepared to talk about any burgeoning power issues in terms of the relationship between the shop-floor and line management. They would readily engage with the shop-floor on those points where the shop-floor defined that relationship as the crucial one. The talk here spoke of the need for change of 'style' at that level for instance. Problems and grievances, were made to settle around that point. Senior management were able to position themselves at a distance - benevolent minders and overseers. There was almost a sense of an alliance between senior management, the consultants and the reps. to commonly approach that 'problem area' of shop-floor-supervision relations. That was deemed the appropriate site of any discussions on power relations on site. The inertia and caution of line management facilitated this. Line managers did not appear to what to get involved. They adopted a merely responsive and defensive posture. It was also a time before they approached the scheme in any way proactively.

However, and here is a significant shift, as the scheme developed and different kinds of issues were encountered, the shop-floor reps. increasingly came to re-site the problem area in terms of the relationship between themselves and senior management. As management's presentational rhetoric began to creak, as lesions appeared, as the shop-floor began to engage management's discourse

more interrogatively then the shift developed. More concretely the shift centred on two features. Firstly, senior management's unresponsiveness in relation to certain types of issues. Whilst the reps. continued to operate from within the habitual shop-floor discourse, problems continued to be defined in narrow department based, even individual based, ways. However, as wider issues were engaged, the debate encrouched more and more on areas of, what were normally considered, the prerogative of senior management, and less in the arena of line management's responsibility. Issues like leaving at 3.30, unpaid leave especially precipitated this realisation. It became more confrontational as management continued to define such issues as site-wide and thus beyond the scope of the department-based participation meetings. The shop-floor reps. increasingly came to challenge the prerogative of management to so define the issue and to challenge other areas of claimed (senior) management prerogative.

The move is related to a move from participation being defined in terms of 'immediate' local participation to an attempt to get it defined in terms of 'distant' participation. A move that inevitably shifted the ground from shop-floor-line management relations to shop-floor-senior management relations.

A second significant shift involved that of the shop-floor reps. away from their members. This is at least partially explainable in terms of the reps. continued and increasing involvement in a different discourse domain. Their involvement in the scheme entailed an immersion in the language of the meetings, in formal 'participation talk', in the language of management and in the language of the consultants. These stand as virtual separate 'codes'.

Initially the reps. remained within the habitual discourse of the shop-floor for which, what has been termed 'the moaning-groaning script' is a motif. Gradually they began to take on board the language from these other codes. At times those codes achieved a dominance and became the lingua franca, almost,of the reps. More often though, it was mixed or translated back into the language of the shop-floor. Eventually the reps. began to establish their own mode of discourse in relation to participation - part of which involved terms and relations around the issues of power (some of that language has already been identified in 'Counter-languages'). The point here though, is that as the reps. moved in this way the remainder of the shop-floor discourse continued in its habitual form. The rest of the shop-floor continued within their traditional code which provided its own position of intelligibility. That tended to mean that participation continued to be defined as not belonging to the shop-floor but as owned by management. It tended to be viewed with scepticism and a degree of negativism.

The drift was noticed by the membership - there was talk of 'selling-out', of the reps. moving in a different realm. It is a theme reported by Bank and Jones (1977) in relation to the experiences of Worker Directors at British Steel. A gulf developed between the reps. and their membership. It was a move partly identified and encouraged in management discourse with talk of 'priviledge' of 'commitment to the group' and so on. A positioning strategy, as has been suggested. The reps. new code had talk of 'selling' participation and ideas developed within the group to the members. There was a new language of leadership and not of mere representation. There was talk of group 'solidarity', in relation to the shop-floor membership as well as in relation to the management.

A further point of displacement was in the relation between line management and supervision. Line management had always defined themselves as being in a separate position. But, as one of the section heads stated (as reported in a section earlier on), they defined themselves as being in a position where they represented company policy. Their talk in relation to the scheme initially displayed a mixture of caution, anxiety, scepticism, bravado and disinterest. They revealed that they expected to be attacked by the shop-floor. Furthermore, or as a consequence, they approached the meetings in a passive, merely responsive frame. It was a long time before they came to approach the scheme at all proactively. They perceived the scheme as a vehicle for shop-floor grievances. In no way was it defined initially as a possible means by which they could tackle some of their own problems.

The expected vitriolic never really materialised, or when it did it was possible to show that the fault did not always lie with line management, that they were constrained by other levels and other sections in the workplace (something which assisted in the shift of the reps. interest in the methods of line management to those of senior management). Line managers became more relaxed in their relationships with the shop-floor, or the reps. at least. Gradually new possibilities in relation to the scheme were considered, there was a careful probing, a testing out. People like Cyril especially began firstly by backing shop-floor reps. on certain issues and then watching the response. Then there was a phase of slipping in issues of interest to line management under cover of issues put forward by the shop-floor - sort of supplementary questions. Eventually the line-management reps. did begin to approach the scheme more proactively - raising issues of their own, representing their <u>own</u>

interests and not trying to adhere to a 'company' view.

Line management began also to question senior managements prerogative to define things in particular ways. They gradually came to confront their own relationship with their superiors. That power relationship became another focus of interest, again, as issues were raised that further impinged on traditional senior management prerogative. Line management more clearly came to define themselves as a separate group within the company structure, a group with their own interests that needed representing and protecting. The espoused rhetoric of unitarism was further undermined.

The talk of line-management also began to move away from the 'official' discourse - the 'company' discourse. They too came to construct a particular way of talking about participation - a different code. The presented definitions of their overlords were found to be not in their best interests necessarily, they were full of unfulfilled promises. Line management talk gave rise to their own emergent definitions.

The other shift was a moving together of the shop-floor reps. and line-management. Shop-floor reps. emerging from the general operatives' language community defined and castigated their immediate superiors in habitual ways, the ways documented in earlier sections. The continuing engagement of the reps. with line management under the auspices of participation engendered an interactional arena from which those definitions were played out and new ones began to emerge.

Line management did not receive the strong, personalised attacks they appeared to expect. They were also able to represent their position as <u>they</u> saw it to the shop-floor reps. The latter

came to appreciate that many of the problems previously defined as residing in the practices of their immediate superiors were seen to actually lie outside of their control. There was a growing realisation and understanding of line management and their true position in the power relations of the company.

Talk amongst the reps., both shop-floor and line management, began to index a new 'solidarity' a mutual approach to common problems. But much of this is mixed with a new confrontational talk vis-a-vis senior management.

One last point here. The remainder of the shop-floor tended to continue in their habitual discourse mode. They evaluated power relations from within that discourse and its accompanying episteme. The language of frustration, stasis, anomie, Fatalism, compliance continued. The perceived failure of the scheme from their point of view, of course, reflexively serves to reaffirm that discourse and that episteme.

What I have described here I suppose are some of the shifts and realignments of power relations at Tridy as the scheme progressed. However, the discussion thus far has dealt with formal questions of power. Little has been said about the nature of power and the processes of power. It is encumbent upon me now, in view of the immediately preceding and all that has gone before to articulate some conception of power.

A Diagram of Power

Let us begin rather pessimistically with some comments from Foucault (1977). He maintains that we are still a long way from understanding power - he suggests that it is only in the nineteenth

century that we have even come to grips with the notion of exploitation. As he puts it:

> "...this enigmatic thing which we call power, which is at once visible and invisible, present and hidden, ubiquitous". (p. 215).

A little later he remains even more sceptical:

> "The question of power remains a total enigma."

However, despite these statements, which in view of the caution with which the issue is approached, and the ceaseless debates that are brought about when it is, strikes a chord, Foucault does have a remarkable amount to say on the subject of power.

Despite its enigmatic quality it also, almost paradoxically, has a kind of obviousness also. Clearly for Foucault, as for many others, power is not to be confused with authority, with positions of authority. He makes it dear that power does not, necessarily reside in the hands of those who govern. It is a more pervasive phenomena than that. For Foucault power is ever present, embodied in all our relationships. He also talks about it simply as being always exerted in a particular direction - with some people on one side and some on the other. From this point of view he is able to posit the crucial problematic of power:

> "It is clear who exploits, who profits, who governs, but power nevertheless remains something more diffuse." (p. 214).

Power is emigmatic because it is habitually hidden in discourse that presents itself as innocent. I have already pointed out in preceding sections how discourse is ultimately an ideological, even political, practice but it does not appear as discourse in this

way. It effaces itself - it becomes, Foucault has suggested invisible for political reasons, so that the will to power inherent in discourse is more covert, more insiduous. A naked will to power is unpalatable, and furthermore is more readily countered.

Each discourse ofers itself as truth, proposes to talk knowledgeably about the real. As is already clear discourse is a site of a particular episteme. It has its own incorrigible propositions (recall the oracular discourse of the Azande) its own canons of truth. As E.W. Said has, it each brand of discourse, each text, even each statement working from the canons aspires to:

> "...designate such matters as relevance, propriety, regularity, conviction and so forth." (1978, p. 706).

There are, thereby, 'regional' but productive constraints upon the production and subsequently the interpretation of texts.

Discourse is a vehicle or an instrument of expoused knowledge. Knowledge is a way of ordering the world, it is a way of saying this is how things are. Knowledge is assertive and it excludes other possibles. Bersani (1977) talks about the exercise of power as 'diagramming' - that is as an ordering of knowledge within a particular discursive frame. Here we start to approach the nub of the matter. He suggests that the 'intent of power' (if we can allow 'intent' to pass here) is the immobilising of experience through ordering it. But, of course, it is a particular ordering - it excludes alternatives and offers a closure on other ways of attaining meaning, other ways of knowing. As Foucault himself says, discursive practices are characterized by:

> "a delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories." (1977, p. 199).

They attempt to articulate an enclosed space, a specified ground that is adequate, final for the purposes for which it is made to apply. At their most elaborated and most inclusive they seek to totally claim an area of knowledge such that it is virtually impossible to think or speak outside of them - for to do so is to speak the untruth, the meaningless or the mad. Clearly the totalising of discourses is variable. Some achieve this arch-exclusivity - others are less secure, more fluid and permeable - but each discourse aspires to such totality.

Let's return to Foucault's basic project. His own work shows shifts and developments. Here we are concerned with his rejection of any pure textual isolationism - something he accuses Derrida (Said's 1978 article is an excellent comparison of the differences and similarities in the two positions). In a sense he wants to return text to the world: language is not autonomous from all historical and social frames of reference. He wants to re-site text and discourse back in the domain of power practices. Forms of knowledge are domains of discourse and hence are strategies of power. His treatment displaces power from any formal structural placement, from the economic realm - it is not a reflection of social structure as Foucault says:

> "Power is not an institution, and it is not a structure, it is not a certain power with which certain people are endowed; it is a name one gives to a complex strategic situation in a given society." (Foucault, 1978).

And here is the crux of Foucault's conception, the point that has been identified previously, discourse is at the centre of this 'strategic situation' - it is at once the object of the struggle for domination and the means by which that struggle is engaged. Knowledge is a way of re-presenting reality, it is a way of stating the way things are, it is a means of ordering and classifying experience. Discourse embodies that attempt - it is the means by which it is accomplished. Talking about reality, ordering experience, classifying in ways that include and exclude is an exercise of power in the most fundamental way. Discourse and power occupy the same ground; to lay claim to a discourse is to seize a form of power, and any seizure of power is an appropriation of discourse. Discourse is the object of the struggle for power; but not only the object of power, also the decisive stake of power. Discourse is a discourse of knowledge always. But there is a dialectic here. Discourse defined in terms of knowledge necessarily involves the exercise of power, but in the exercise of power new forms of knowledge are generated, especially when there is a struggle between competing discourses. The generation of new forms of knowledge offers fresh possibilities for the exercise of power.

The point about the disguise of discourse re-appears here. The discourses (of knowledge) are not revealed as being inhabited as a will to power. Rather they are presented as innocent, as sensible, objective and exclusive orderings and selections of experience. Some discourse domains are clearly and obviously political and are areas of debate and controversy - but others aspire to totality and incontrovertible truth. But they are only different moments in a process, not absolute differences. Discourses of knowledge present themselves as rational, say a logical rationality or a moral or a

socio-political or an economic rationality, but, it is suggested each of these is only a rationalisation of power: the will to power disguised by rationality.

The dominant discourse of knowledge today, the most encompassing, is that of science. It presents itself as a rational, objective way of ordering reality. Micheal Serres (1980) suggests that those orderings have come to appear as natural, but when they are traced backward, invariably lead to the socio-political realities of power and domination. We need not make the statement so strong. The discourse of science is a way (or series of ways) of ordering experience and as such is an exercise of power. Serres criticism/observation perhaps can be made to apply more readily to the social sciences (which is where Foucault directs his deconstructive talents). Serres' argument is that science ultimately is involved in domination practices because it is part of a wider movement that is primarily political. It responds to certain requirements for order that are founded upon and determined by power relations. Again Nietzsche's striving to displace the primacy of the discourses of logic and rationality has a place here. The hegemony of those discourses has an illusory naturalness. As Serres points out "...the order of reason is only a particular exemplar of order in general."

A similar point is made by Said (1978) in commenting on Foucault's project:

> "...discourse is not mere formalisation of knowledge, its aim is the control and manipulation of knowledge, the body politic, and ultimately (although Foucault is evasive about this) the State." (p. 678).

Foucault speaks at some length about certain 'rules' of the formation of discourse or, since "knowledge is specified by discourse and vice versa" (Said, 1974: p. 31). (He also asserts that "the tautology does not matter), 'rules' of the formation of knowledge. Said (1974) again:

> "What he (Foucault) does say is that knowledge is produced, disseminated and reformed in ways that can be intelligibly specified and characterised, albeit with difficulty." (p. 31).

It is beyond the scope of this section to delve into those 'rules' or their implications, except indirectly. They also correspond to a method for approaching discourse. Those rules/methods are 'reversibility', 'discontinuity', 'specificity' and 'exteriority'. (For a reasonably lucid discussion of these see, Said 1972).

Each discourse, then is a language of control. Often, there are a set of institutions within the culture which it constitutes as its special domain. As Foucault points out, texts are an integral, and not merely an accessory, part of the social processes of differentiation, exclusion, incorporation and rule. It is here that he moves beyond 'textual isolationism'. Again Said (1978) provides us with an extremely useful summary of Foucault's position. Text has a place in a 'complex tissue of forces' - a place among others, where the 'strategies' of control in society are conducted. Foucault has been interested in two sides of the same coin:

> "...the process of exclusion by which cultures designate and isolate their opposites and its obverse, the process by which cultures designate and valorize their own incorporative authority - it is now certain that Foucault's greatest intellectual contribution is to an understanding of how the appetite for or will to exercise dominant control in society and history has also discovered a way to clothe, disguise, rarefy, and wrap

> itself systematically in the language of truth, discipline, rationality, utilitarian value, and knowledge. And this language in its naturalness, authority, professionalism, assertiveness, anti-theoretical directness, is what Foucault has called discourse."
>
> "...discourse works its productions, discriminations, censorship, interdictions, and invalidations on the intellectual level of base, not of superstructure. ...The goal of discourse is to maintain itself and, more important, to manufacture its material continually." (Said, 1978 p. 705).

The will to power, the systematic relation of power to discourse has been disguised. Here again the full force of rhetoric must be appreciated. The construction of discourse as an exercise and/or will to power is hidden by the rhetoric that enables discourses to present themselves as innocent, of speaking clearly, objectively, naturally and truthfully. Discourses of knowledge, then, are in a sense neutral - neutral in not being said to be guided by a will to power.

Another important element of Foucault's critical practice is to make it clear that a desire for knowledge is always an 'interested' desire. It is a desire for knowledge for a reason, for a purpose. It is a desire for a particular way of ordering reality. It is a desire to achieve a totality and an exclusivity on the behalf of some interested party in society. Thus applies both those who present themselves as constructors of the discourses of knowledge and for those who use discourse for more practical purposes in the social realm - although such a division is somewhat artificial.

The construction of any discourse, or its totalising use, immediately, at the same time drives something else out. All texts displace or dislodge other texts or other possible texts. They occupy a space that excludes. The implications of this in the context of

Tridy have already been considered (especially in the Chapter 'Definitional Vacuums'). The interpolation of certain textual relations lessons the possibility of others - alternatives - being able to occupy that space. The ability of one text to achieve exclusion and totality is a function of their rhetorical ability to mask the will to power and to present themselves as natural, obvious, and the right texture. The texture around representational democracy seemed to achieve this at Tridy. On a Foucaultian analysis one would then want to pursue the occupancy of that discourse of representational democracy as a central, hegemonic discourse in society, and how it achieves that position. For the purposes of this thesis, the invocation of that discourse was sufficient to place participation into a significant relationship that was more or less adequate for the purposes at hand. I would want to assert here, that at the micro-level the totalising of discourse is less assured, there is more dynamic negotiation. Or rather, certainly, particular discourses do have a dominant, hegemonic taken-for-grantedness but it is their place, their use in practical situations that engenders more doubt and offers a ground for definitional practice. The obscuring of alternatives was even more momentous for most of the shop-floor at Tridy because they were unable to locate participation in any vital discourse that gave it a position of intelligibility. The notion of place is here significant.

Foucault is shifting from purely ontological considerations towards a more political or at least moral frame of reference. It is a shift from a purely textual or linguistic system. Part of that move implies yet another sophistication of the notion of the signifier. That is, it is important not only to consider the signifier, but to explore its <u>place</u> - a place not in abstraction, not innocent, but a

place within discourse with all the authority that discourse possesses. Its place in a discursive matrix that excludes and includes. That discursive matrix having its own place amongst others. That placing, then, has a force. Signifying in place is - rather than merely represents - an act of will with ascertainable political and intellectual consequences (Said 1978 p. 709). It is an act that is an attempt to locate and occupy a position, to give a position of intelligibility that offers knowledge, a willfull ordering of things in particular ways. It is, then, an act of power. Power not possessed, not priviledged, acquired or preserved by formal positions (including class positions) but power that is exercised in these placings. The exercise of power recognisable in the overall effect of these strategic positionings. Serial acts of signifying in place is itself an exercise of power, relating specific utterances to ideological practice. Creating the relation 'participation-science' is an example here. The placing of the signifier 'participation', there, aligning it with the discourse of science is a political and ideological move. It places participation within the discourse of science with the authority that discourse possesses vis-a-vis other discourses present or possible in society and in that context. It excludes others and includes participation in that mix of a will to knowledge, a right to speak of reality and truthfully. Its ability to be so placed, also, of course, serves to reflexively reinforce the power of that discourse. It also links participation to the institutional strength of science - those institutions as guardians of truth in society.

It is in this sense that power is said to be everywhere. It does not proceed from a seat or origin of power, its exercise is found always, and everytime in these surface practices; in every act of signification.

> "Power is everywhere, not because anyone possesses enough of it to impose his designs on an entire society, but rather because 'it is produced at every instant, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another' (Foucault 1976, 'La Volonte de Savoir' p. 123). Power is both productive and omnipresent by virtue of its being immanent to all types of relations; relations of power - 'are the immediate effects of the divisions, inequalities and imbalances, produced (in all other kinds of relations: economic, sexual, pedagogical, etc.), and, conversely, they are the internal conditions of these differentiations' (La Volonte de Savoir p. 24)" (Bersani, 1977 p. 3).

The divisions in society are themselves the result of discursive practices. Discourse creates the difference between manager and subordinate, say. Verbal enactments made possible by those discourses that engender differences of relation, also reflexively reconfirm those differences. Power is not something that can be possessed - but the appropriation of a discourse (say the appropriation of the discourse of science by management) and its use is an exercise of power and facilitates the exercise of power. This would include the control of linguistic and non-linguistic signifying practices. The exercise of power is assisted by the concentration,in the hands of certain members or groups,of the means of the production of certain signifying practices. For example, management's signifying practice included 'the staging' of the presentation of participation as described earlier. They had access to, and control of, certain features of the physical situation that also enter the signifying process in particular ways. The rhetorical force of certain of those non-linguistic features also served to place 'participation' within a particular discursive arrangement and give it a certain force.

Each time a signifying practice is engaged in, then there is an exercise of power. It is an attempt to control meaning, it is an attempt to propose one series of relations rather than another - it

therby attempts to exclude. This is facilitated by a discursive practice that already creates subjects and positions them. Those positionings are points of differentiation. They engender at the same moment subjects' ability to engage in certain types of discourse (fully) and excludes them from others. It also provides a position of intelligibility from which that, and other, discourses can be apprehended.

But power also 'leaks' as Bersani puts it. The ability to close meaning is never absolute. Power too is a ceaseless activity, its control is a repression doomed to failure. Power is an activity always present in all these small relations and is released in every signifying practice. Bersani talks of the state and its ordering attempt to immobilise the release of power in all these micro-confrontations. But every act of signification is a site of productivity, as we have seen. Meaning has the tendency to proliferate. However rigidly positioned, however pervasive the discourse mode, the possibility at least, always exists of a counter-manding relation of signifiers being constructed. In this sense every exercise of power inscribes the potential for resistence. Relations of power, in a more simple sense, by definition, include the adversary role. If there were not relations of difference (even among subjects) there would be no signifying practice of any meaning, and no sense in an exercise of power.

Bersani maintains that the exercise of power is invariably in excess - (I have already spoken of the need for repetition, for a re-saying that is different) - that releases counter positions. The control of meaning is recognisably problematic. Managers in their presentation of participation were obliged, simply by the reoccurence of

situations and by the obligations perceived in different contexts, to re-present it variously. In doing so it is put into new and different relations. The plurality of meaning becomes more apparent at each turn. The aspired to coherence becomes increasingly more impossible. It is here particularly that the lesions appear and the possibilities of a re-reading and a counter-practice becomes apparent.

Furthermore, the very speaking, releases new areas of discourse in the relationships. The very articulation of 'participation' is a newness. All its relations with other signifiers becomes a new verbal ground for the shop-floor. · It offers new possibilities for work-talk to be put in different ways. Management despite its efforts to site participation in specific discourse arenas cannot control the possible relations into which participation may be put. In any case, the signifying act that places 'participation' in particular discourses only serves to make available those discourses to the shop-floor. And, management articulation of those discourses is necessarily very partial and leaves much ground open to exploitation. It is here, then that the very possibility of a counter language develops. But only if the potentially adversorial side of the relationship perceive the relationship in that way. And only if they engage the text and discourses of management actively and interrogatively.

The aspiration of an exercise of power, the will to power, is an immobilising of experience and a closure on meaning through an appeal to knowledge - that is through a supposed correct and natural ordering. But, Foucault, maintains, it defeats its own object; as Bersani (p. 5) puts it "by always producing in excess of the calculable requirements of a strategy of domination". That excess is partly

the result of the natural productive impulse in language but partly the result of the more practical need to say more. The latter may take the form of a meta-commentary one one's own prior constructions, or a simple repetitiveness that is never exact replication but always a difference, or "of a supplementary bavardage which may lend itself to a regrouping of several elements in the networks of power" (Bersani, p. 5). Remember a supplement too inevitably provides a difference. All this overflowing, disrupts the attempted coherence. It is a release; a release of signifiers and textures that can be assimilated and reconstituted by others - and reconstituted more significantly into an oppositional frame.

The exercise of power, then is a diagramming, an ordering of knowledge within a particular discursive frame. But it is also a productivity, a release and an overflowing that provides the possibility of an interrogative practice and a re-diagramming or at least the chance "to provoke a mutation in the diagram" (Foucault 1975, cited in Bersani 1977). A chance to expose lesions in the text and to exploit them.

Every resistance 'to the exercise of power is, of course, a counter-exercise of power'. The power of a signifying practice can only be countered by another signifying practice ('My brothers bigger than your brother - so there' - 'well, my dad's bigger than your dad'). The exercise of power, then is also an attempt to contain the signifying responses of others - by positionality, by obscurity of indexed discourse - by rhetoric and reliance on ideology.

Management attempt to provide a coherent, rightful and enclosing sense around 'participation'. To make its textual relations appear right, obvious and natural. That attempt is an attempt to

foreclose upon any alternative signifying response; to make alternatives unspeakable, if not unthinkable. The relations of 'participation - democracy', 'participation-historical inevitability', 'participation-science', are power moves that place participation in a diagram that is consonant with:

> "a larger cultural strategy which elevates a certain type of intelligibility into the very criterion by which we are expected to recognise or to legitimise 'experience'. And an implicit agreement about the natural shape of human experience is of course far from politically neutral...." (Bersani 1977, p. 7).

Power, then, is an exercise of signification. It is enacted whenever there is an attempt to promote particular sign relations that offer up a particular ordering of experience. Those relations are presented as the real, natural ones and are exclusive of alternatives. Power is the invocation and use of discourses of knowledge. But is power merely the act of signification, is it only a signifying practice?

What we perhaps need to assert is that the signifying practice engaged in is impactful. We are concerned with how particular relations come to have credibility and legitimacy and are successful in their practices of exclusion and inclusion. In other words, given that there is an awesome meaning potential present in any situation, how is it that certain meanings attain a coherence, a relative fixity, and are to an extent socially accredited? Power is concerned with the practices by which that is achieved and also with the practices by which a partial closure is accomplished. A practice by which there is a "marginalising, down-grading or de-legitimising (of) alternative constructions" (Hall, 1982 p. 67). The practice by which, ultimately, certain relations are taken-for-granted while others become virtually unsayable.

One might put it in terms, then of the ability to define situations. Power as the ability to engage in a signifying practice that constructs a texture of relations that occupy a space in interaction, that is accepted as an adequate or right textual covering of the experience or phenomena faced by the participants; that excludes alternatives and fully occupies the space. At a higher level it is the hegemonic practice of certain discursive frames that attain a dominance by claiming to speak knowledgeably and morally. It is the ability to offer an account that is accepted (if only temporarily), as the account.

The power struggle at Tridy is manifested in the attempt by management's signifying practice to construct a text around participation that aspires to the status of a preferred and limited range of meanings. It is embodied in their effort to maintain coherence and the legitimacy of their account. There is an internal power struggle as it were, for that text to police its own boundaries, to halt the potential profileration of meaning. There is a power struggle also to maintain that version and to prevent alternatives and the possibility of a signifying practice from other participants that might come to take the form of a counter-language. It is an attempt at closure, it is an attempt to stem the surplus, the overflowing of meaning, it is an attempt to paper-over and disguise the lesions.

Many of the points of that practice have already been articulated during the preceding sections and chapters. I have spoken of 'definitional vacuums' and various practices that elide alternatives. I have spoken of positionality and the locating of subjects within particular positions of intelligibility. I have highlighted the place of rhetoric in constructing relations and giving them a signifying

strength and the place of rhetoric in masking inconsistencies, incoherences, the lesions in the text.

There are practices and also resources available for interested parties to pursue their will to power. There are the linguistic signifying practices that have been most frontally illuminated. There are also those non-linguistic signifying practices identified earlier. The use of the signifying force of the physical features of settings; the impact of dramaturgical presentations; the control of temporal features of the situation.

One might want to assert that there exist certain institutional arrangements, fortified and re-created in discursive practice, that give certain parties to the situation a right and an ability to control, to an extent, the means of the production of signification and the means of the control of the release and flow of signification. I am thinking here of management's ability to control the construction of the minutes of meetings for example. Their ability to control the construction of agendas. Their authority and capacity to access various information sources on site, including the opinions of others. All of this, and more, facilitates, inequitably, the ability to engage in a signifying practice that constructs an account, that offers up an authoritative meaning. It allows management again to create a discourse that presents itself as a discourse of knowledge. They have the information, and they appropriate the discourse of knowledge already invested in the discursive arrangement that positions them as 'managers' and thereby as 'experts' (knowers) in particular appropriate arenas. It is they that are held to have 'knowledge' about 'company' matters - that is their priviledged discourse.

As Foucault would have it, signification is not a neutral practice but a practice of power. Significations enter the conflictual arena of competing interest groups as real and positive forces. As Hall (1982, p. 70) puts it:

> "The signification of events is part of what has to be struggled over, for it is the means by which collective social understandings are created - and thus the means by which consent for particular outcomes can be effectively mobilised. Ideology on this perspective, has not only become a 'material force' .... - real because it is 'real' in its effects. It has also become the site of struggle (between competing definitions) and a stake - a prize to be won - in the conduct of particular struggles."

(Curiously the debt to Foucault is not referenced here).

I have already made plain the position of ideology in the process of signification, particularly in the power practice of closure. As one might exepct then, power is also an ideological exercise. But ideology, and its effects depend, as Hall nicely puts it, on the "politics of signification". Acts of signification rhetorically index particular discourse domains. Each relation stands contextually as adequate but 'documents' an unexpressed discourse, a discourse that is known and familiar and allows an intelligible position for the syntagmatic relation. 'Participation-representation' indexes the discourse of political democracy. Participation is located as a political element and the ideologically appropriate language of politics is the discourse of political democracy. The relation 'participation-representation' appears as natural and obvious and shuts out alternatives.

Giddens (1976) too, speaks of the use of power in interaction in terms of the resources and practices which participants bring to and mobilise as elements of its production. But more importantly, he draws attention to the means (he uses the inappropriate expression

'skills'), whereby the interaction is constituted as 'meaningful' (p. 113). He makes a criticism of the ethnomethodologists here. They too are concerned with the creation of meaning in the 'labour' of interactants: meaning as an accomplishment. But, they assume that in an interaction between peers each contributes equally to the production of the interaction and that the only 'interests' are those of sustaining an appearance of 'ontological security' whereby meaning is constituted. There is a sense of this criticism that matches Foucault's assertion that power is always in a direction and is from the desire of interested parties.

There is an imbalance that militates against the negotiated order thesis of Strauss (1978) and Day and Day (1977). Certain parties do have advantages in their ability to construct a signifying practice and in presenting a particular range of meanings.

As Giddens (1976, p. 113) points out the creation of 'frames of meaning' occurs as the 'mediation of practical activities'.

> "The reflexive elaboration of frames of meaning is characteristically imbalanced in relation to the (I replace 'exercise' for 'possession' here), of power - whether in terms of greater linguistic or dialectical skill - or technical superiority."

One can avoid the intentionality implied here by asserting simply that certain signifying practices, for a number of reasons, have the capacity to achieve a state of relative fixity, coherence and naturalness. At Tridy the signifying practices of management discourse had this capacity, although, as we have seen it was not absolute.

On(e) Conclusion : Defining Situations

This is only a beginning. All texts are defeasible, all texts are subject to their own further deconstruction; even critical texts, even texts that are commentaries on other texts. There is here no final statement, no absolute covering of the phenomena spoken of. This is not an authoritative account.

What is, hopefully, available is a site of further productivity. It is an invitation to the reader to engage interrogatively both the whole text and the reported data-text. Particularly, the reader is invited to examine the relationship between the two, to investigate its tensions. The meanings present here are not meant to be final - they are both in practice and in principle incomplete, the reader is free to construct or re-construct fresh ones.

As author, I have not engaged in a fully reflexive practice. I have, then, not been able to avoid structuring and interpreting 'naively'. I have not avoided being polemical and persuasive. But that is not necessarily a cause for concern. It is particularly at those points where the thesis is non-reflexive and not merely textual, and enters a suasive mode, that it is most potentially productive vis-a-vis an interrogative reading practice. It is there that it too becomes rhetorical and its own lesions and grounds for deconstruction are exposed.

There is then, no end to this thesis, no natural closure. But for the sake of convention and a certain aestheticism, here is <u>one</u>. In true reflexive fashion, the end takes us back to the start but of course in the process that which was present at the start has been transformed.

The thesis begins with an articulation of the concept of definition of the situation. An adopted sociological story employed partly heuristically as something to place in dynamic relation to the data emerging from the research practice. It was a story that was found to be flawed and other 'stories' were taken up.

However, the definition of the situation was not evacuated, and continued throughout (until now even) to work against the data and other theoretical developments. The result of that dynamic is in part embedded in the thesis through all its unfolding. Any sense it may now have is located in the body of the text and in relation to its original formulation in chapter one. I do not propose to try and present here a closing, finalising statement on the concept of definition of the situation, but some aphoristic statements complete the composition.

Definition of the situation, as a concept, reiterates that tension deep in the heart of this thesis. It wants to stand theoretically as a concept of process - and indeed it does. But, at the same time it is a practice embodied in real interactional affairs. On that basis it is an attempt to halt process. To define a situation is to engage in a signifying practice that is an effort to provide closure on meaning - it is an attempt to provide <u>one</u>, legitimate or credible version.

It is, obviously, then, an exercise of power. It is the attempt to have one's version of events, ones frame of meaning, one's mode of ordering accepted and socially accredited. One might define power tautologously as the ability to define situations in particular ways.

Definitions of situations are constructed and maintained through all the signifying practices (including the non-linguistic) that have received some consideration in this thesis. They are the manifestation of acts of signification engaged in order to present and promote a particular textual option.

Defining situations is an activity, a discursive and signifying activity, it is not a mentalistic or intentional state. As Hall puts it:

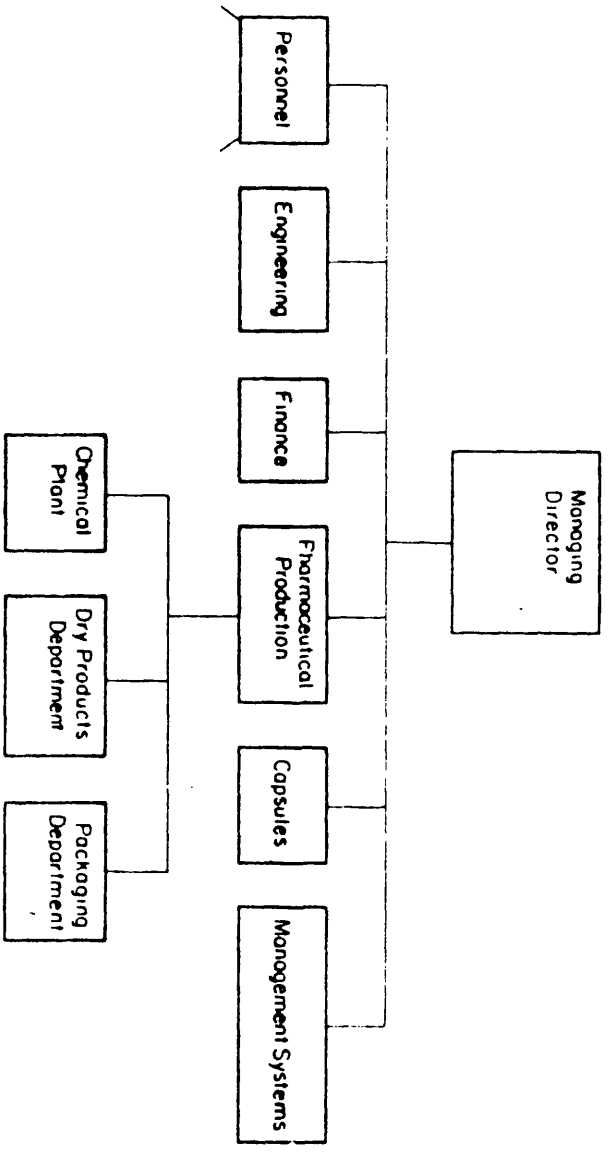
> "It implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping; not merely the transmitting of an already-existing meaning, but the more active labour of making things mean." (1982, p. 64).

Defining situations is a political process. It is the grounds and the means of the struggle in social life through which people pursue their interests and seek to have their versions of reality triumph over others.

It is a contest in meanings.

APPENDIX 1

COMPANY STRUCTURE



APPENDIX 2

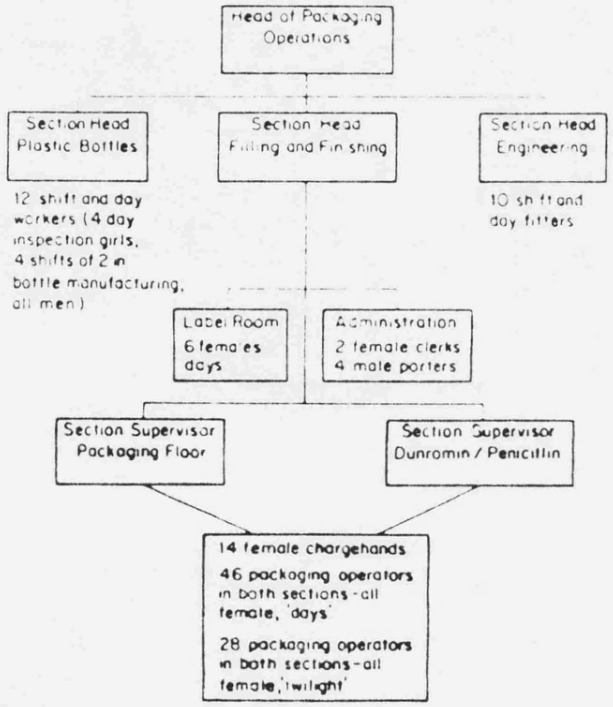


Figure I Organization of Packaging Department

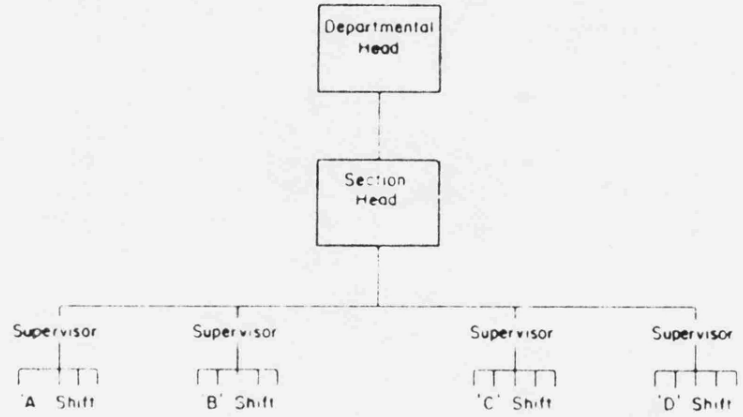


Figure II Organization of Chemical Plant

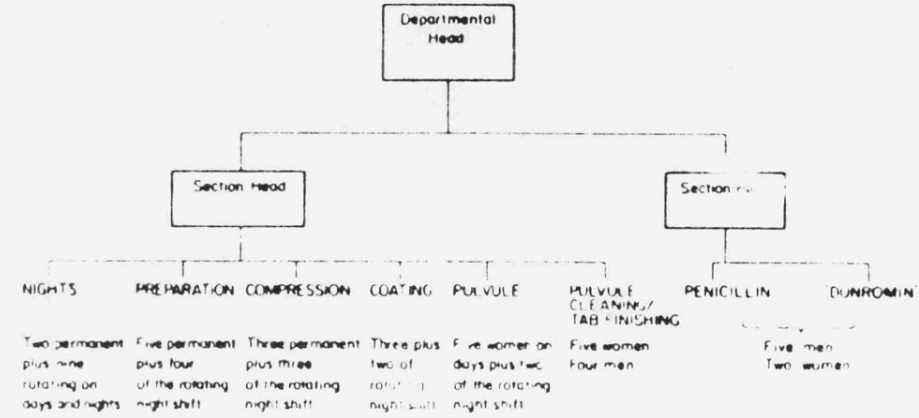


Figure III Organization of Dry Products Department

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